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THE WAR EAGLE

By W. J. DAWSON

THE FATHER OF A SOLDIER

ROBERT SHENSTONE
A Novel

AMERICA
And Other Poems

THE WAR EAGLE

A Contemporary Novel

BY

W. J. DAWSON,

AUTHOR OF

"THE FATHER OF A SOLDIER"

"ROBERT SHENSTONE," ETC.

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori

NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY

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THE WAR EAGLE

THE WAR EAGLE

CHAPTER I

THE WAR EAGLE

I

I THINK there are few young men of my age who have a more intense joy in life than I, George Waller, have. There's a phrase used by Lucas Malet which haunts my memory—she speaks in one of her novels of the "magnificent rage of living." I think this is exactly what one feels on such a morning as this, when every sight and sound is an incitement to live. The air actually sparkles; it seems full of glittering bubbles, of a fine effervescence, which goes to the head like wine. The lake is a deep blue, and this also sparkles with a thousand motes of light. All round rise the fir-clad hills, breathing out fragrance as the hot sun bathes them. Through the orchards, which the hills enclose, runs a song of falling water. A hawk hangs poised above the chicken houses, sole inimical symbol in this realm of peace.

I have been here nearly a month, and I am surprised at the hold which the place has taken on me. I thought I was a townsman, to whom lighted streets, clubs,

restaurants, theatres, and all the daily interchange of mind, were vital. I know now how little these things really meant to me by the ease with which I have relinquished them. Was there any true interchange of mind in all those rapid contacts of opinion round restaurant tables or in club smoking-rooms? I greatly doubt it. Minds are like flowers, they only open in clean air and silence. As I sit here and write, the stillness is so great that I can hear my watch tick. It seems to me I can also hear my mind think. One's real thoughts are very shy, not easily persuaded out of secrecy. One's opinions are another thing—they have an impudent liking for display. My old life in New York was provocative of opinions; but my thoughts were hidden in my heart like the nesting birds in these wide woods.

Perhaps it is a little presumptuous to suppose that one can ever ascertain his real thoughts; they are so overlaid by convention, so flawed by pressure of all kinds from without.—— No, these are not the right words. The word that comes nearest to my meaning is the old word "hypocrite," in its original sense of "play-actor." We are all play-actors, I, no less than others. We adopt emotions, and simulate them so cunningly that we come to imagine them our own. I rather think I have adopted the emotions of the literary man. I have thought of fame, won by my pen, as the supreme prize of existence. Not the object of existence—I am not foolish enough for that, but the prize, the efficient symbol of success. The curious thing to me is the suddenness with which this prize has ceased

to be of value, its rapid depreciation and disappearance. And the cause lies in nothing more remarkable than a month's separation from the life of cities, a month of primitive existence in this unspoiled land.

For the life here is very primitive. A dozen years ago these shores were clothed with an unbroken forest; twenty years ago the only voyagers on the lake were Indians in their frail canoes. A few are still here; they come about midsummer, erect their tepees on the shore, and go hunting in the hills. To-day, all along the lake side, there are ranches, each one of which represents incalculable labour. Men have come here one by one, nearly all of them English, unaccustomed to physical toil, but eager for adventure. They have had to cut down the forest trees, blast out the stumps, collect mountains of stones from the land, build their own houses, plant their orchards, establish their own forms of social life. I am living in one of these home-built houses; it is called "a shack." An English cottager would probably regard it with disdain, for it is built of rough wood, and has the appearance of a large chicken-house, except for a verandah that runs along its front. But it has a garden and lawn, and a runnel of pure mountain water flows past its door, and from its always open windows is seen a great panorama of hills and woods. I wake every morning with delight, and watch the great cone of mountain to the north flame like a torch; I sleep with that blessed sound of running water in my ears, and the fresh breeze upon my face. What can I ask more? I am happy: happier far than I ever was in cities.

Certainly I have earned my happiness, if ever man did. I see no reason why I should not record that boast. We are too much afraid of boasting, which is an entirely honest temper, and it should be encouraged rather than reprimanded. I believe our fear of boasting really comes from the old pagan terror of the jealous gods, who hate men to be happy and take particular pains to rob a man of happiness the moment he makes sure of it. Well, I am quite willing to submit my case to the gods. I am twenty-six, and of these years twenty have been years of labor. My childhood was vexed with lessons; then came school with its perpetual examinations, and then Oxford with more examinations, and then years of writing, at the rate of eight or nine hours a day, in the slow attempt to achieve authorship. I have had to live for certain objects—I have never simply lived. By that I mean life has never been an end in itself.

From to-day I am resolved that things shall be different. I will not live again for things; I will just live. I wonder whether my entire education has not been wrong in this respect, that it has emphasised the objects for which I should live, instead of the immense boon of mere living? With one man the object of living is success, with another wealth, with another the degree of culture which ensures distinction; it does not much matter whether the end presented is good or bad, the essential thing is that it withdraws the thought from the act of life to the purpose of life, and makes the purpose our tyrant. What it really amounts to is that we live to get something, not to be something.

And all the time life itself rushes past like a joyous pageant in which we have no part. We lift our tired eyes from books, seeing it for a moment, perhaps with a dull yearning, and plunge back again into books, with a false sense of something noble in our refusal to admit its challenge. This is what Puritanism has done for most of us. It has filmed our eyes with seriousness. It has tried to make our lives noble and has only succeeded in making them arid.

Perhaps it is the kind of life lived here, in this remote outpost of the world, which suggests these ideas. I have come to know these stranded adventurers of Fruitvale pretty thoroughly. They certainly work, but it is at the compulsion of their own wills, and not for a master. Why they left England is a secret which no one reveals, but the motive with most of them was a desire for freedom. To possess a bit of land, to raise one's own crops, to build one's own house, to be independent—this was the bait that drew them across the seas. There's a Robinson Crusoe in every English boy, and he doesn't die with boyhood. He whispers at the ear of the city clerk, the man whose business isn't prospering, the professional man whose career seems blocked: "Own yourself, come adventuring," is his message. And then, some day, the clerk sees a flaming poster in a window with a picture of hills impossibly blue, orchards in snowy blossom, a neat ranch-house covered with roses, and a lake with white sails—and his unseen Robinson Crusoe says, "Here's your chance." Of course the real thing isn't at all like the pictured thing. The orchard isn't there,

and no rose-covered ranch-house awaits him; but the dream of it is there. So this man who has never worked with his hands has to learn to plough and plant and build, to be his own carpenter and plumber, to do a hundred jobs he would have scorned in England, and to work in a way he would never have imagined possible. For the first time he realises that manual labour is sweet, because it is for himself; and it is not discreditable, because every one does it. The man on the next ranch may have been a graduate of a university or the cadet of a titled family, but he wears blue jeans like the rest, and is not ashamed. The conventional values of life are lost; every one has a chance of being valued for what he is intrinsically. This is exhilarating to the spirit, as the free open air life is to the body. Going Crusoe-ing is at all events good fun, and St. Robinson is certainly a much wholesomer patron saint than St. Simon Stylites.

Are these people happy? Not as happy as they think they are, for you don't leave personal anxieties behind by crossing oceans; but if you think you are happy, that's three parts of the recipe for happiness. At all events, they are a cheerful community. No doubt, if they stop to think, they may note in themselves a certain deliquescence of ambition; but that in itself may be an element of happiness. The less baggage of ambition we carry on our shoulders the more freely can we step out along the roads of destiny. That's a queer sentiment from my pen; but you get to feel in that way if you live in a place like this. It reminds me of Emerson's Apologue of the quiet stars

and the excited politician: "Why so hot, little man?" Why indeed, with this benignant landscape round you, this little world where all the harsh sounds of life are harmonised into a distant rhythmic murmur, soft as the wind among the trees?

It is nearly noon, and round the lake I see the approaching steamer, which is our only link with the larger world. She is painted white, and in the distance looks like a white swan, pushing her silent way through the long glassy ripples. She brings with her food for our tables, letters, papers, but scarcely ever a passenger. Papers? They seem a gratuitous impertinence. Who cares for news of that vexed outer world, when this little world is so much at peace, so happy in its round of simple duties and affections?

II

Dutton has just been up to see me, asking me to make a set at tennis this afternoon. We have an excellent court on a little bluff above the lake, and all Fruitvale gathers there on these July afternoons. Dutton is my nearest neighbour, a lean young fellow with an old face and a boyish manner. He pretends to work in the mornings, and wears blue jeans like the rest, but they are an affectation. His hardest work is caring for his lawn, and doing odd jobs about the house, for he is one of the few residents who have a private income. His real interest in life is tennis, and each afternoon sees him arrayed in spotless white duck, recruiting players for the game. I don't know his history, but he lets it be supposed that he was once in

the army, and was retired through broken health. But, like the rest, he says little of his past, and is wholly engaged in the living of the present, which, for him, means getting the best time he can out of life.

Morrison came on the same errand about ten minutes later. He is physically a great contrast to Dutton—a big-boned handsome man, with a touch of grey round his temples and on his close-cropped pointed beard. He drifted into Fruitvale, so they tell me, four or five years ago as a visitor, and, before he knew it, succumbed to the beauty of the place, and gave up hopes of ever getting out again. He lives with his wife and child in a tiny shack about a mile up the lake, and earns a little money by doing odd jobs. He also has some kind of tenuous income, without which he could not live at all. He looks like a man who might have succeeded in a professional career, and he has never lost a certain smartness of appearance. He reads a good deal, subscribes for the *Weekly Times,* and *The Graphic,* and can talk intelligently about public affairs. I noticed a daily paper sticking out of his pocket, and asked him what was the news?

"Pretty serious news," he replied. "It looks like war."

"War? Between whom?" I asked.

"Germany and Russia," he replied.

He handed me the paper, and across its front page there glared the words, *"War Imminent."*

"The old kind of European squabble," said Dutton. "It flares up every second or third year, but it never comes to anything."

"I'm not so sure it will come to nothing this time," said Morrison gravely.

"O, rubbish," retorted Dutton. "You know better. War has become obsolete. Germany may bluster, but she is much too wise to take the risks of a European war to-day. Europe wouldn't permit it."

"Europe may not be able to prevent it," said Morrison. "What do you think, Waller?"

Now it happened that not long before I left New York a pacifist friend had given me Norman Angell's book, *The Great Illusion,* and because I was fond of my friend, in spite of what I thought his untenable opinions, I had promised him to read it. I did so with reluctance, but as I read the book I found my interest in it growing.

"He's certainly right in a great many things," I said to myself. "Modern warfare has become so deadly that it is impossible upon a large scale. There isn't money enough in any nation to finance a great war. It looks as though war has broken down with its own weight." And so I put the book down with the comfortable conviction that the Millennium had begun, not as an interposition of heaven, but as the fruit of a new human reasonableness.

I remembered the book now, and my New York friend's passionate pacificism, and a meeting I had attended with him in Carnegie Hall, where three thousand people frantically applauded the well-known lines about the battle flags being furled "in the Parliament of man, the federation of the world." And so I replied to Morrison's appeal by echoing Angell's opin-

ions, and declaring that war was a barbarous anachronism, quite out of date in this modern world.

"Barbarism is never extirpated," was his grim reply. "We're all barbarians still, under our skins. At least I'm sure Germans are."

"O, come, you fellows," said Dutton impatiently, "what's the use of wasting the time arguing? We've got to practise for the tournament, you know, and it's only two weeks away."

As I didn't feel the least interest in arguing, and thought Morrison rather a solemn bore, I was glad to go. The discarded paper was flung on the verandah, and we went down the shady wood-path to the tennis court, eagerly discussing the prospects of the tournament.

All the women were on the tennis-court, of course, and a very pretty picture they made in their white dresses, with the blue lake for a background. They looked astonishingly girlish and played with a great deal of gay laughter. A stranger would certainly not have guessed that most of them were wives, who had passed all the hours since dawn in all sorts of household duties, many of them of a hard, laborious kind. But this is one of the features of our Fruitvale life which is quite admirable—the women do not fall into slovenliness because they have a good deal of rough work to do. They keep a humanising love of dress, although they have small opportunity of gratifying it, and they make a point of coming to the tennis-court as spick and span as they would be at an English garden-party. To hear their fresh laughter, and see their fresh

colour, and watch the eagerness with which they play, one might suppose they had not a care in the world.

I wish I could make vivid this idyllic picture of the tennis-court on this July afternoon. A little after five o'clock the sun dipped behind the mountain, the air cooled and freshened, and the long shadow of the mountain fell across the court. A deeper shadow, from a land six thousand miles away, began in the same instant to impinge upon our carefree life, though we knew it not. We were sitting on the grass, drinking tea, when the chug of a launch was heard on the lake. The launch stopped at the wharf, and there stepped ashore a friend of mine from Vancouver, Alan Joddrel. He was a fair-complexioned young Englishman, who had induced me to buy land on one of the Western Islands which I had never seen, and I supposed he had come to offer me some fresh bargain. We welcomed him to our little *fête champètre,* but I noticed that he was very silent, and began to imagine that he had bad news to communicate about our mutual land investment.

"Anything wrong with the land?" I asked.

"No, it's not that," he replied. "It's something bigger."

He drew a telegram from his pocket, and said, "Read that."

It was from his brother, who was in a government office at Ottawa, and read as follows:

"War is expected between England and Germany. What are you going to do?"

"Well, what about it?" I said. "You surely don't believe it."

"Yes, I do," he said. "My brother has special means of information, and he wouldn't wire me unless he thought the situation serious."

"But the morning paper said nothing about it. It talked of war between Germany and Russia, but said nothing about England."

"A local paper can't be expected to have the latest news," he replied. "In Ottawa they know things long before the press gets hold of them."

"The mere whisperings of government offices," I said lightly. "What do they amount to? But even suppose it were true, which I don't for a moment believe, what has it to do with you, Alan?"

"Why, I should go. I had a pretty good training in the Territorials before I left England, you know. If England fights, Canada will have to fight too."

"But you have a wife and child, Alan. And then, there's the land. You've got a year to run, haven't you, on your pre-emption? If you don't stick to your pre-emption, you'll lose it. And, of course, there's the land we hold together. You know all about that, and I know nothing."

"That's why I came to see you, Waller. I may want you to take over the whole affair. I thought it was only fair that I should put it up to you."

I was startled by his seriousness. A man doesn't travel hundreds of miles to see a friend unless he has a good reason, I reflected. But nevertheless the whole thing seemed preposterous. This scare of a war be-

tween England and Germany was an old scare. It had happened in the Boer War, and again over the Agadir affair, but in each case had come to nothing. Besides, hadn't we been told again and again of late that friendly relations with Germany were an essential part of English policy, and were never on a sounder footing? It was true that I had taken very scant interest in international politics, for I had been too busy writing stories. But I had known Germans at Oxford, young Rhodes scholars, and they were the friendliest fellows. And I knew that the Liberal Government had enough trouble on its hands with Ireland, and besides this was pledged to a great programme of social reform. Of all unlikely things the unlikeliest was that such a government at such a time should enter on a great war, for which in any case England was totally unprepared.

"My dear fellow," I said, "do put all this nonsense out of your mind. There will never be a great European War again in our day."

"Won't there?" he said quietly. "Do you know that for a month past all the Germans have been going back to Germany as fast as ships could carry them? They've been going from Vancouver, as I happen to know. And the people at Ottawa know it too."

"Even if there were war, what has it to do with you, Alan?"

"Canada helped in the Boer War," he replied, "and Canada will have to help again. But this time it will be a much bigger business."

"Well, I don't believe it, Alan. Come up to the

house and stop over night. You'll see things differently after a good sleep."

"No, I can't. I'm going back to the Coast to-night. My wife knows nothing of this, and I must tell her. But I do want you to do something for me before I go."

"I'll do anything you want, except believe your scare telegram. What is it?"

"I want you to come back to town with me in the launch, go to a lawyer, and accept power of attorney for our joint affairs. It will make me easier in my mind, if you'll do this. If war doesn't come, we can revoke the power of attorney. If it does, it will be a great comfort to me to know that you'll look after my interests."

"Of course, I'll do it, if you seriously wish it, Alan. But all the same I think you've got a bad attack of nerves, and you'd be far wiser to stop a day or two with me on the ranch."

"That's what I expected of you," he said, grasping my hand. "I think we'd better go now; I've ordered the launch to bring you back because I was sure you would come."

Dutton and Morrison came up while we were talking, and I introduced them to Alan.

"Mr. Joddrel thinks there's going to be war between England and Germany," I said.

"No fear," said Dutton. "Germany knows better than that. What about the British Navy?"

"But what about the British Army?" said Morrison.

"The finest in the world," retorted Dutton.

"But the smallest," retorted Morrison.

The women gathered round us, and were waiting to be introduced. There was little Mrs. Dutton, almost pathetically young, and Mrs. Vernon, a pretty Londoner, and Alice Croxon, who had come from New York to spend the summer with Mrs. Vernon. They were quite different in type, but as they stood there, each dressed in white, they might have passed for sisters. Mrs. Dutton made friends by her girlish charm, Mrs. Vernon by her vivacity as well as her Dresden-china prettiness, and Alice Croxon by her nimbleness of mind and compact grace. During my month upon the ranch I had seen a good deal of all three; we had bathed, boated, and gone on picnics together. Alice Croxon I knew to be a very worldly little person, whose worldliness was only partially concealed by that alluring grace of hers; but she knew how to charm men, and make them her bond-servants. The married men were always running errands for her, to the imperfectly concealed annoyance of their wives; and if her tennis-shoe wanted tying there were half a dozen candidates for the privilege. Of course I had been fascinated too; daily propinquity on the lake and in the woods had settled my job. I suppose I was in love with her, but I had kept my clearness of eye, and was perfectly aware of her defects. She knew this, and didn't seem to care. I think she liked me all the better because she was under no necessity of hiding her faults from me, or pretending to be something which she was not.

"What are you men all looking so solemn about?" said Mrs. Vernon.

"My friend, Mr. Joddrel, thinks there's going to be war between England and Germany," I replied.

"O, I thought you were discussing the tournament," said Mrs. Dutton. "I think I shall enter for the doubles. I hope Mr. Joddrel will be here, and help us. My husband says there's a tremendously strong team coming from King's Bay, and we shall have hard work to beat them."

"And they've got Captain Canning," said Mrs. Vernon, with a shrug of her pretty shoulders. "He's got the swiftest service you ever saw. Isn't it dreadful for a poor player like me?"

No one took the least notice of my remark about the threatened war. They all began to chatter about the tournament. Presently, when I went down to the launch with Joddrel they all came with us, and Mrs. Vernon was very earnest in requesting me to go to a certain shop in town, and get for her a new racket, which had been ordered a week before, and had not come.

"It's such a lovely evening, I wish we were coming with you," said Mrs. Dutton.

"Capital notion. Come along. There's plenty of room in the launch," I said.

The three women were eager to accept the invitation. They didn't get many opportunities of the kind. If they went down the lake to Summerton (which, by the way was our local metropolis and quite a thriving place) they usually took the market boat on Satur-

days. Going to Summerton in a launch on a fine July evening meant much the same thing to them as a coach-ride to Brighton means to a London girl, who knows Brighton only by excursion tickets on the railway.

"But what about the men?" laughed Mrs. Vernon. "They'll have to get their own suppers, and what will they do without us?"

"Learn to appreciate you," said Alice Croxon in her soft drawling voice.

Dutton looked rather surly at the arrangement. He was the kind of man who never values his wife till he sees her going off with some one else, and then becomes stupidly jealous. But, of course, there was nothing he could do but acquiesce, and so the launch was pushed off from the wharf with a gay mimicry of farewell, in which Dutton joined with a fairly good grace.

If one had been ever so much disposed to encourage solemn thoughts, it would have been quite impossible in such company. The evening itself was of a perfect beauty, such an evening as men remember long years after with wonder and yearning, when they are sick or old. One side of the lake lay in purple shadow, the mountains on the other side still held the sunset, and the sky was like a great rose-red banner hung across the lake. The surface of the water was here smooth as glass, there rippled by a gust of wind, that brought with it the penetrating odour of resinous pine-trees, the smell of grass and cattle, and the scent of flowers. Even Alan forgot his ominous telegram, and was soon as gay as the rest of us. We chattered,

laughed, jested, and finally sang, less for delight in the music than the childish pleasure of hearing the echoes of our song given back from the darkening hills.

I soon got through my business with Alan and saw him off on the eight o'clock train for the Coast. It was about nine when we left Summerton and were again upon the lake. The sky was now like a canopy of dark velvet, sprinkled with jewels. Lights shone out from the windows of the little houses on the hillsides, as though the sky had spilled some of its stars among the woods. Mrs. Vernon wanted to sing, but the other two women made no response to her suggestion. Then Mrs. Dutton and Mrs. Vernon fell to talking about some domestic matters, something to do with the best methods of preserving fruits, and presently about this eternal tournament, which was quite the biggest thing in their immediate future. As for me, I was rather glad to sit silent, and gaze into the dark mystery of the lake, and try to guess by the unfolding of the hills how our course lay.

Just before we reached our little bay, Alice, who sat beside me, pressed my arm, and said in a low voice, "Do you really think there's going to be war?"

"Of course I don't. Are you anxious?"

"Well, yes, just a little. You see a friend of mine wants me to go with her to Paris in October, and if there was war, I suppose we shouldn't go. And I do so love Paris. Don't you?"

The voice of Dutton hailed us from the wharf at that moment, and I was spared an answer.

III

It will be no news to my friends that I am of an introspective turn of mind—I shouldn't be a novelist if I wasn't. I am very curious about other people's motives, and I probe my own with more frequency than is good for me. When I was quite a child I had a habit of comparing myself with other boys to my own disadvantage. Most of the other boys I met seemed to be vigorous little animals, with a well-poised self-sufficiency, whereas I was shy and diffident. In their presence I often suffered agonies of shame over this self-distrust of mine. There was nothing I coveted so much as a sense of self-sufficiency, which seemed to be theirs by nature, for I saw that they really enjoyed life, while life for me was a constant struggle to be something that I was not by nature.

I'm reminded of this condition of mind this morning by seeing some of the children swimming in the lake. They came trooping down to the water with shouts of excitement, stripped themselves rapidly, and stood in the sunlight with their young bodies poised upon the diving-board, eager for the plunge. I have often wondered why artists have given all their attention to the female body, and have rarely seen the beauty of the male, which in a young boy is one of the most perfect objects in creation. Certainly I have rarely seen anything more beautiful than the slim grace of these boys' bodies, poised in the tense attitude of the diver above the glass-green clear water, with the

reddish tree-boles and the yellow sands for a setting of the picture.

But the thing that set me thinking was the absolute fearlessness of these boys. The water is seven feet deep at the diving-board, and none of them have more than an elementary knowledge of swimming. Yet they do not hesitate for an instant. Now, in their place, I should have been full of apprehension. I should have thought of all the people who had been drowned in the lake, and of all the strange fish which swim in it, and above all of the discouraging fact that the water was seven feet deep, and that I was less than four feet tall. My imagination would have become morbidly active, and I should have had to make a strong deliberate effort to overcome it before I could have dived. My heart would have risen into my throat as I dived, and even in the act of diving I should have been plagued by the fear that I might never rise to the surface again. I am a strong swimmer to-day, and enjoy the sport thoroughly, but even to-day I am never wholly free from a foreboding of disaster when I am in deep water. My childish fears still persist because my imagination is still in excess of my reason.

I remembered these childish sensations as I watched the boys in the water, and, just to assure myself that I was not afraid, I climbed to the roof of the boat-house, and took the long dive, to the immeasurable delight of the boys. I repeated the act half a dozen times to please them, and then sat in the hot sun on the sands, they standing round in an admiring circle.

Presently they went away. They had found a new sport in striding logs, and paddling out into the lake.

And then some curious association of thought brought Alan Joddrel to my mind.

While I had been writing books, what had he been doing? He had surveyed unknown lands, forded streams and crossed perilous swamps, pushed his way through forests piled with fallen timber, camped on solitary mountains, and faced a hundred times hunger, storm, and danger. Yet he was by no means an athlete. He was London-born; his home was somewhere in a street of trim middle-class houses, and his father had spent his days travelling on a bus to and fro between a most proper London suburb and a most proper lawyer's office in Chancery Lane. Alan had seemed predestined to the same kind of life, but some drop of adventurous blood in his veins had driven him out into the waste places of the earth. Who had really lived most, he or I? Which was the life better worth the living, mine or his?

At last he had come to anchor, had got his pre-emption of three hundred acres on a beautiful shore-line, had built a house, married, and become a father. And now, at the call of battle, he was ready to fling all this aside, and risk his life in a much more terrible adventure than any he had yet known. Yet how calmly he had spoken of it! He had quietly assumed that the call was indisputable. The case was beyond argument. He had not so much as considered an alternative. He had had some training in the Territorials in the old country, the old country would need soldiers, there-

fore he must go—thus ran his simple logic, and he found it inevitable.

Lying there in the warm sands, thrilled with the joy of living, I confess that Alan's logic was to me unthinkable. The whole thing appeared monstrous. Because statesmen were fools and rulers knaves, because neither had the commonsense to arrange their affairs with a rational discretion, a young man who had no part in their quarrel, who did not even pretend to understand it, was to be dragged from wife and child across six thousand miles of sea and land to be slain or mangled on a battlefield! To put the case upon the most utilitarian grounds, was he not manifestly of greater service to society where he was? He had done something not inconsiderable to build up a great Dominion. He was at the point in his career when he could do much more. He had ambitious schemes for developing a town-site on his land, and had boasted that there was no better natural harbour on the Coast. Let any sane jury judge the case, and would not the inevitable verdict be that he could be of far greater value to Canada where he was than in the most advantageous position that war could give him? I had a moment's vivid vision of Alan's house derelict amid weed-grown fields, and Alan's wife and child gone, and he himself lost to sight in rolling battle-smoke, and my heart rose up against the stupendous folly of it all.

His life and mine—I had begun by comparing them—dare I go on? I began to perceive a peril to my satisfaction. A dark thought lurked ahead, and lifted

a venemous head out of its ambush. I felt the old childish terror of deep water, and the sense of shame I had in the presence of other boys who had no terror. Alan had no terror of war. He was not imaginative. Was I letting my imagination master me in the old way? Was the half-anger that I felt at Alan for his cheerful courage in reality the subtle fruit of a lack of courage in myself?

That was not a path of discovery which I cared to tread. I might discover too much. I might by chance come within reach of that venomous thought that lay ambushed and feel its sting.

"Heigho, what nonsense I am thinking," I said to myself. "Here's a day made for living, not for thinking."

So I rose from the warm sand, dressed, and went down the trail whistling. I remembered that I had promised to go boating with Alice Croxon in the afternoon.

IV

The day was indeed made for living. The whole narrow valley was like a chamber lit and perfumed by the spirits of Summer. Bluebirds, bluer than the sky, flashed in and out among the apple-trees; a kingfisher sat watchful on a cotton tree: delicate humming birds, half butterfly, half bird, hung above the lupins in our little garden. With long slender beaks they drank the nectar of the flowers, their wings of gauze moving in swift ecstasy, their tiny bronze and green

bodies glittering in the sun. And that air, blown over a hundred miles of forest and sun-warmed mountain summits, where was there anything that equalled it? Even when the atmosphere was quite still it had an edge to it, a tonic freshness, like the air that blows across a glacier. But every afternoon, with the greatest regularity, there came a long draught of air from the lake, and then a gusty breeze, as if some one had opened a window in this chamber of the Summer. This was the hour when I loved to be upon the lake. There is not much pleasure in rowing a boat on entirely placid water: one misses the gurgling music of the little waves around the bow, the running spools of foam, and the handful of glittering drops flung into one's face by the spirits of the lake, who love their jest. And this afternoon Alice Croxon was to come boating with me.

She was three-quarters of an hour late. It was her habit to be late, not from a slovenly disregard of time, but because it was an assertion of her independence. Women have very few ways of asserting their independence; the most innocent way is unpunctuality. I fancy also that they have a notion that their company is the more valued when it has been waited for. To be told "I thought you were never coming" is a kind of inverted compliment on their appearance.

She made a charming figure in her brown holland dress, unrelieved by a single touch of colour. She was bare-headed, and the sun wove glints of gold into the darkness of her hair. She lay back on the red cushions in the stern of the boat, holding a dainty Japanese

sunshade above her head and I had plenty of opportunity to observe her.

I had often done so, but I had never yet achieved a satisfactory analysis. The first day I met her I had jotted down in my note-book her outward characteristics—"Small head after the Greek type of sculpture, vivacious eyes, rather peevish mouth, a trim figure of the most precise neatness, a slight physique that does not however indicate frailty, rather tenseness of nerve, finish too fine to admit the least excess: a very complete little person, of a deceptive simplicity."

Novelists who know their business keep notebooks for the express purpose of recording things like this, not knowing when they may be of use to them in their work. But in such generalisations there is usually much to be sought, and the more I had seen of Alice Croxon the more perplexing had she become to me.

Did I love her? Undoubtedly I did in the way I have already indicated, by virtue of propinquity. No young man can be constantly in the company of an attractive woman without instinctively making love to her; it is expected of him. He may do this with a very imperfect knowledge of her real qualities, and this was my case. What were the real thoughts that went on in that little head? I did not know. Part of her attraction lay in my ignorance of her. Some parts of her mind and temperament she was ready enough to expose. She professed, as I have said, the most complete worldliness. Her most frequent conversation was of theatres, matinée idols, concerts, balls—all the artificial pleasures of a city life.

"I am not sentimental," she was fond of saying.

And because she said it so often I was suspicious that it was a pose. When a woman asserts too vigorously that such a thing is so, it is a pretty good proof that it is nothing of the kind, and that she knows it. And, besides, she sometimes forgot her pose. There were brief instants when another self looked out of her eyes, like a face in the window of a house one had thought deserted. I had heard her quote poetry of a romantic character, and had not been altogether deceived by her apology that "Every girl learns that sort of thing at school, but it doesn't follow she believes it." And there were times too when the awe of the mountains fell upon her: times when her face was transfigured by a new look of wonder and solemnity. It was swift to pass as a cloud-shadow on the lake, but it was there, and I tried to think that it was the indication of a deeper nature in her than she herself was aware of, or was willing to admit.

We had crossed the lake and were floating idly in a little bay. A great cotton tree rose out of the swampy shore, and its blossoms floated down in constant showers like snow. There was no sound save the ripple on the sand, the movement of the wind in the cotton-tree, and a wood-pecker tapping on a tree-trunk in the woods.

"Isn't it lovely?" I remarked.

"Yes, but there's an emptiness about it, don't you think?"

"Empty of what?"

"Why, life of course. All these miles of shore, and

a house only here and there. All those great forests, and not a path in them that is made by human feet. I confess I find it depressing."

"That's because you're city-bred."

"Well, aren't you? No, it's not that at all. It's the lack of life, of human life. This is a place for old people who've done with life—it's no place for the young."

"Nine-tenths of the folk here are young. How do you account for that?"

"They're not really young. They haven't the sensations of the young. They've no ambitions. I guess they've buried their youth in their orchards. Think of living to grow strawberries and apples! No one who is really young could do that."

She laughed scornfully. I liked her best when she laughed, for then the peevish droop of her lips disappeared.

"I sometimes think I could be content with such a life, nevertheless," I said.

"Then you've got another think coming," she said flippantly. "O, I know that sort of feeling. I get it every summer: it's as regular as hay-fever. But I know it doesn't mean anything and so do you."

"You think I'm insincere then?"

"Of course you are. That is, you're sincere in flashes, but in the bulk you're insincere. We can both live this kind of life for a month or two, but if we had to live it always we'd as soon go to prison. Shall I tell you what I've found out about these Fruitvale women? They all profess to think their lot idyllic,

but there's isn't one of them who wouldn't get out of it to-morrow, if she had the opportunity."

"Your friend, Mrs. Vernon?"

"She more than any of them. The poor thing is dying to get back to London. Of course she isn't going to say so. It's the Fruitvale etiquette for every one to profess absolute contentment. But she never plays tennis on our dusty court without yearning for those green tennis lawns you have in England, and when the spring comes she cries herself to sleep because she can't go shopping at Peter Robinson's."

"Why, what a discerning little creature you are! Are you quite sure you don't discern what doesn't exist?"

"That would be difficult, wouldn't it? Except, of course, for novelists—that's their business. They make a point of seeing the thing that isn't, and they very often don't see the thing that is."

"I wonder," I said, gazing into her eyes. She caught my meaning, and blushed.

"Let us change the subject," she said composedly. "I want you to tell me about your friend Mr. Joddrel. What does he mean by saying there is going to be a great war?"

"He thinks there is, and he's made up his mind to go. That's all there is to tell."

"Then I suppose he's like Mrs. Vernon, an exile who says he's contented and isn't——"

"O, it isn't that at all," I interrupted. "Alan has a strong sense of duty."

"You mean a strong sense of life. He knows very

well he isn't living. He's stuck away upon some dismal island, isn't he? And he wants to get back into the stream, wants to get away from the dead folk, because he's got some spark of youth not yet extinguished in him. That's why I liked him. He had a young look in his eyes. He looked so different from the Fruitvale men. They've all got that old tired look—Dutton particularly—but Morrison, and Vernon, and all of them. You've only to watch their eyes to recognise it."

"They've all got it, have they? You'll be telling me next that I have it, I suppose."

"No, it's only incipient in you. But if you were to stop here long enough you'd get it, never fear."

"Really this is most interesting. Would you kindly tell me just what this Fruitvale eye looks like?"

"Like the eye of an ox—flat, dull, opaque—O, anything, you like. You know what I mean. A dog's eye never looks like that, because a dog is the most alive of all creatures. And I liked Mr. Joddrel because his eye was alive—it had fire in it."

She laughed at the conceit. The too earnest pursuit of metaphor generally ends in the ridiculous.

"Ox-eyed Fruitvale, I must remember that," I said.

"Chewing the cud," she added. "The cud of past hopes and ambitions, because there are no present ones."

"Are you ambitious, Alice?"

"If I were a man I should be. I should want to get everything I could out of life."

"Well, women are ambitious to do that."

"Ah, but they get so little. Life is served out to them in such small cups."

"If you were a man you'd do as Alan is going to do, go to the war, if there is one, eh?"

"No, I hate war. It's so stupid. Thank God America is out of all that kind of thing. Let the crowned idiots of Europe quarrel, if they want to. It doesn't concern us."

She was silent a few moments, and then, as if a new thought had struck her, "You're an American, aren't you?"

"Certainly I'm not. I thought you knew that. I'm English."

"But you've lived in New York for years, and your books are published there: do you mean to say you've never become a citizen?"

"I not only have not, but I do not intend to."

"O, please pardon me. I didn't know. And I had a reason for asking."

"Do you mind telling me what it is?"

"Not now," she said. "Don't you think we had better be going home."

But she did tell me after all. The wind had fallen, as it usually did at sunset, and the lake had the subtle colours of an opal. I rowed slowly back, reluctant to lose one moment of the evening beauty. A warm air from the sun-baked rocks came in long draughts, as though the world breathed softly as it fell into sleep. Alice lay on her red cushions, very silent and absorbed. The dusk closed down rapidly, till I could see only the pale oval of her face.

We were nearly at the wharf when she spoke.

"There's something I want to understand," she said in a low voice. "Does a man who lives in one country and loves another really belong to any country?"

"He belongs to the country of his birth," I answered.

"Isn't he in danger of becoming a man without a country?"

"Why, what are you thinking of, Alice?"

"I'm thinking of Mr. Joddrel. I've been wondering if you are like him."

Whether she spoke in irony or in earnest I could not tell, for it was too dark to see her face, and she gave me no chance to reply. She leapt lightly to the wharf, and half a dozen of our friends drew near, laughing and jesting, I had no doubt at my expense. Fruitvale is like all the rest of the world in this respect, that its women dearly love to see love-making, and are keen to report its progress and its prospects.

I said good-night to her at the end of the wharf, and walked slowly up the dark path to my little house among the trees. All the way that last enigmatic saying of hers was in my ears, and I began to understand that she had told me something which she hadn't meant to tell. She had told me that she thought of me, and whether a woman thinks ill or well of a man, it means a good deal that she should think of him at all. A woman doesn't think about a man in whom she is not interested. Here I found comfort, but in the comparison she had made between me and Alan I found something inimical. The comparison was clearly not to my advantage.

"Woman's unintelligible inconsistency," I reflected. "She hates war and admires Alan for wishing to go to war. She congratulates herself that America is immune from Old World political convulsions, and is inclined to blame me because I profit by that immunity. I wonder what she would expect me to do if war really came?"

"Well, what would you do?" said a voice within me.

And at that I laughed, for the question seemed absurd.

The still night lay round me. Mosquito-hawks flew low, an owl called in the wood, a dog barked in the distance. The solemn hills stood around in a great half-circle, like hooded monks in silent vespers. The little runnel of water at my door sang a song of peace. A great star rested, like a lamp, on the shoulder of a hill immediately across the lake.

Who could think of War in such a scene?

V

So those last days of July, 1914, found me peacefully engaged upon a new book, writing each morning in the little verandah of the shack, boating and swimming in the afternoon, conscious of a new-born vigour of mind and body that had come to me in this holiday among the mountains. Then came that fateful Sunday, August 2nd, when Germany declared war on Russia, but of course we knew nothing of it in our remote solitude. I remember thinking that very morning how Fruitvale, lying in the pocket of the moun-

tains, was so separate from the world that the world's doings had as little real relation to its life as the troubles of the earth might have to a soul that had passed to what Defoe finely calls "the other side of Time." The conceit pleased me so much that I tried to fashion it into a poem, one verse of which I can recall:—

> Here shall be neither haste nor heat,
> Nor bitterness of struggle, nor the wrong
> Man works on man; only the quiet beat
> Of hushed waves murmuring a song,
> And winds that weave a poet's rhyme,
> In this still place where sleep is very sweet
> Upon the other side of Time.

"Not so bad," I said. "I'll send it to *Maclean's Magazine,* and call it 'My Hermitage.' They'll give me fifty dollars for it, maybe."

I fell to thinking how big fifty dollars looked in Fruitvale, and how little in New York. For the price of a dinner at the Waldorf a man might live a week, or even more, in Fruitvale. If these simple folk knew that I could earn fifty dollars by an hour's pleasant work with pen and paper, what a Crœsus they would think me! Fifty dollars would enable Morrison to re-shingle his shack, which was in bad repair; it would give Mrs. Vernon the new dress she had dreamed of in vain; it would be the enchanter's wand, and the magic carpet, and a whole Arabian Nights' Entertainment. No doubt to these simple folk I must appear a kind of magician, an inscrutable sort of fellow, who had found some unlawful means of turning the lead of labour into fairy gold. Well, so I had, for

I perceived this quality in my kind of work, that it was work which was the real delightful expression of myself, whereas the work of most men was the expression of nothing but the primitive desire to earn one's bread.

And then, because I happened to put my hand in my pocket and drew forth Alan Joddrel's power of attorney, I fell to thinking of him, with some sympathy and just a touch of half-amused resentment. I recalled a night when we had sat together in a hotel bedroom at Vancouver and he had detailed to me his plans and hopes with such fresh boyish glee and energy of expression that he had quite captivated me. He had told me something of his life: his exodus from England against the counsel of his parents, his arrival in Canada with less than twenty pounds in his pocket, his chance choice of a city—I think it was Calgary; his fruitless application for clerk's work, his first job at digging drains, his employment as surveyor's assistant on the railway without the smallest knowledge of surveying, his gradual rise, his trip through a wild country of great natural wealth, his discoveries and his adventures—the common idyll of the great Canadian north-west, but to me, a townsman, unspeakably fresh and thrilling. I admired him for being so much that I was not and could never be, and from admiration it was an easy step to trust. We became partners that night, and I had never had the least cause to regret my faith in him. And now he was tacitly breaking his partnership, going off at a tangent, throwing away all that he had gained with so much

exertion, and it didn't seem fair. It certainly wasn't fair to his wife and child.

"But there won't be any war and he won't go," I said to myself. "He's an adventurer at heart. He scents a new adventure—that is about all it means; but his adventure won't materialise."

My reflections were interrupted by the arrival of Dutton. It seemed that late on Saturday night he had started the idea of a camping party and had found enthusiastic support among his friends. The plan was to take two pack-horses and two tents, with the requisite provisions, and go back into the mountains about nine miles to a high solitary valley, locally known as Silver Lakes.

"You'll come, of course?" he said.

"Who's going?"

"Ourselves and the Vernons. We've asked Miss Croxon, of course. If you go, that'll make the party just right. We three men will have one tent, and the women the other. It'll be great fun."

"Isn't it a rather hard tramp for the women?"

I had Alice Croxon in mind, of course. I wondered how a New York girl would fare on such a journey, and I had an absurd picture in my mind of Alice in thin high-heeled French shoes plodding up a road that rose three thousand feet in six miles, and was in places full of huge boulders washed down by the spring rains.

"I thought of that," he replied with a genial grin, which told me that the same absurd picture was in his mind too. "Suppose you take your horse—then the

women can ride in turns. I'm afraid we haven't a side-saddle anywhere, but I daresay they can manage somehow."

"It sounds delightful. Of course I'll come. What are your plans?"

"Well, I thought we might start between two and three this afternoon. We ought to get there about six. That'll give us nice time to get the tents up and light our fires. There's lots of fish in the lakes, and we can get some for supper. I did think of putting it off till the middle of the week, but this weather is too good to miss. If the weather holds we can stay there two or three days. And, by the bye, take plenty of blankets. It can be awfully cold up there after sundown."

"All right. I'll be ready at two. Where shall we meet?"

"At the store. We'll get our provisions there, and pack the horses. We'll have a great time."

He went down the wood-path whistling gaily—a trim slight figure in a white outing shirt, a khaki tie, and tan leggings.

We met at the store in the afternoon, and there was the usual difficulty in getting our very unworkmanlike packs adjusted to the horses. If there is any animal more sly and obstinate than a British Columbian packhorse, I do not know him. He appears almost pathetic in his meekness as he stands patiently with hanging head, but in reality he is deeply meditating schemes for the defeat and humiliation of his masters. There is an unmistakable gleam of amused

malice in his eye as he contemplates their efforts to bind clumsy loads upon his back. He has a trick of swelling himself up when you tighten the girths, and immediately releasing his breath when you think you have succeeded with him, with the result that the packs fall off the moment he moves. When this happens he shakes his head scornfully, and regards you with galling pity. You try again, digging your foot into his belly, and straining at the girth till it seems it must break, during which operation ignorant bystanders are apt to mutter strong words about your brutality, for such persons always take sides with the horse, and this incites him to a more diabolic obstinacy. All these things happened on this summer afternoon. Old Mrs. Hales, who, previous to her arrival at Fruitvale, had always lived in cities, where she was a peculiarly diligent member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, happened to be passing on her way to Church, and stopped to address very hurtful remarks to Dutton, who at that moment was delivering a vigorous kick at the rump of his horse; and Mrs. Vernon, with a pained expression on her pretty face, was engaged in patting one of the other horses, muttering, "Poor thing!" Dutton had lost his temper and was red in the face, not only with his exertions, but with the effort to suppress the swear words which bubbled to his lips. Alice Croxon's attitude was still more annoying to Dutton: she clapped her hands and laughed at his misfortune.

"If you think it's easy, come and try yourself," he said viciously.

I don't suppose we should ever have started unless Vernon had come to the rescue. Vernon was a clerkly looking young fellow, in a worn knickerbocker suit of faded English tweeds; who, in spite of his clerkliness, had picked up a good deal of practical efficiency during a year that he had worked among the silver lead mines. He certainly knew the wiles of pack-horses. The horses seemed to know that he knew, in a way that horses have, and recognised the unwisdom of maintaining the struggle as soon as he took it in hand. In the end he succeeded where Dutton had failed. Dutton thereupon strode ahead in a palpable bad temper, and we all got away about three o'clock, just as the bell in the little Church beside the lake ceased ringing.

Good humour soon returned, however, as we left the lake and began to climb into the sanctuary of the hills. The road was rough and steep, winding through a vast forest, and the air was exhilarating with the tonic freshness of the woods. After about an hour we left the forest and came out upon a bare stony shoulder of the hill. Far below a stream, with the opaque greenness of jade, flowed silently; or uttered a small voice of complaint as it encountered fallen logs or fell in a miniature cascade. We caught our last glimpse of the lake, blue as turquoise, at this bend of the road. We were soon shut in again by walls of forest, now walking over a path soft with moss and disintegrated pine-needles, now crossing rude bridges of insecure logs, beneath which shrunken brooks lay in glass-clear pools. In the heart of the

forest it was almost dark, and the air was damp. The tamaracks and spruce huddled close together: only here and there we came upon an open space where some giant cedar had fought its way to the upper sunlight.

No words can describe the solemnity of these dark corridors of forest along which we moved. Our voices grew hushed; gaiety was as impertinent here as it would have been in some stately mausoleum or immemorial temple. And, indeed, it was death we saw on all sides. Here had been fought Nature's battle for survival, and the fallen moss-grown trunks, that had once soared a hundred feet into the living air, lay everywhere like gigantic corpses, spotted with the livid colours of decay. And then, just as though one came out of the mausoleum into a lighted Church, bright with painted windows, we emerged from these dark recesses of the forest into tiny open glades, full of sunshine, where heavenly choirs might have been glad to sing. In these green spaces there was indeed something that resembled singing, the going of the wind in the tree-tops, a long pleasant murmur of soft sound —something not heard in the depth of the wood, where the silence lay like a weight, producing the effect of final immobility. And, to complete the illusion, there was a strangely pungent perfume too, as if censers had been swung there just before we came, and the noiseless acolytes had vanished in the very moment of our undesired intrusion.

There was very little conversation on our journey; our energies were too completely engaged in nego-

tiating the difficulties of the trail. When we were not passing through actual forest or moving cautiously round the shoulders of bare hills, where the trail was scarcely two feet wide, we rode through heavy grass which rose as high as the bridles of the horses. Here the trail was particularly treacherous, nothing more than a broken corduroy road of slippery logs between which the swamp water oozed. There was nowhere any sign of man. Once only we came upon a ruined hut, where the wood-cutters had lived in winter, and round which lay the half-cut logs that witnessed their former energy. These signs of human dereliction added a note of pathos to the scene. Man and all his puny labours appeared ironically insignificant against this background of secular antiquity. From these virginal silences came the quiet voice of mockery which proclaimed all the struggles of man but "a trouble of ants in the light of a million million suns." The deserted hut witnessed the perpetual defeat of man at the hands of Nature which he vainly asserts that he has conquered; it was as poignant an evidence of the vanity of human effort as the fallen walls of Baalbec or Palmyra in the wilderness.

Something of this we all felt, and perhaps our silence was in part an instinctive acquiescence in these grave emotions. In these new lands the wilderness is so immense and man's encroachment on it so slight, that all the truly heroic toils of man seem forgotten in the relative futility of his exertions. He comes and goes, but the earth abides forever. Let him stay his hand but for a moment and the wilderness rushes

in and obliterates his work. Let him withdraw for but a trivial decade, for half a dozen years or even for a single year, and the house which he has built amid its fruitful orchard would become even as this wood-cutter's hut with its sagging roof, its grass-grown threshold, and its rubbish heap of rusty pails and broken implements around the door.

We rested for a few minutes at the hut. A little spring at the back of the hut bubbled into an earthen pan; a bluebird flashed among the trees, and somewhere, near at hand but hidden, a woodpecker tapped incessantly. These tiny sounds gave edge to the immense silence. It was a place exactly fitted for the pulpit of that Ancient Wisdom which proclaimed, "What doth our arrogancy profit us? What good have riches and vaunting brought us? These things all pass as a shadow; as a ship passing through the billowing water, whereof, when it is gone by, there is no trace to be found, neither pathway of its keel in the billows; or as when a bird flieth through the air, no token of her passage is found, but the light wind, lashed with the stroke of her pinions, and rent asunder with the violent rush of her moving wings; or as when an arrow is shot at a mark, the air, dispersed, closeth up again immediately, so that mankind knoweth not where it passed through: so, we also, as soon as we are born, cease to be."

It was Alice Croxon who spoke for all of us when she said, "Come away. There's something eerie here."

So we went on, and in another half-hour found

ourselves in an open valley. The forests fell away, like curtains withdrawn. A bright stream ran beside the trail, and ahead of us three small lakes sparkled. The sun had already sunk behind the western hills, but its warm glow still lay upon the water. Vast purple shadows steeped the gorges on the mountain-side. Overhead the sky was a sea of rose, cloudless, with long up-flung streamers of pure light that in the zenith thinned out into arrowy flame.

Our spirits were suddenly released from the oppression of the woods. We had come upon a home-like place, an open-air house, a chamber where great draughts of air moved softly, promising rest and wholesome sleep.

"Here's the camp," cried Dutton, gleefully, pointing to a cleared space beside the water, where half a dozen great stones piled together held the wood-ash of former fires.

And it was with answering light-heartedness we began to unload the wearied horses, and went about the business of pitching our two tents in the wilderness.

VI

We soon had a bright fire blazing and a kettle boiling. The tents were pitched on a little grassy bank, within three or four yards of the fire. Our next task was to cut tender tassels of sweet smelling balsam for our beds. In this task I did not distinguish myself, for I had no knowledge of trees, and in my

ignorance supposed that any kind of young bough would serve.

"Remember you have to sleep on them," said Vernon, with a smile at my incompetence. "You'd better let me do this. Why don't you go and fish while I do it?"

"Yes, let's fish," cried Mrs. Dutton. "It's capital sport. We have an hour or so of good light, and these lakes simply swarm with fish."

So we went fishing, while Dutton and Vernon undertook to get the camp properly ordered in our absence. We walked about a quarter of a mile through the thick grass, already damp with the dew, to the furthest of the three tiny lakes.

"And now we must find a raft," said Mrs. Vernon.

It appeared that what she meant by a raft was half a dozen small logs nailed together by two crossbars. A few years before there had been a lumber camp on this lake, and these rafts were the primitive contrivances which the lumbermen had used in their fishing. After a brief search we found one stranded in a little sandy bay. It was just big enough for the four of us to stand upon.

"It looks rather precarious," I remarked.

"Of course it is. That's the fun of it," laughed Mrs. Vernon. "We're pretty sure to fall off, you know."

I looked apprehensively at Alice. She caught my glance and smiled. If she felt any fear, she certainly did not show it. She had evidently made her mind up to go through with the adventure, and I recollected

my absurd notion that she would wear thin French shoes, which had certainly proved quite baseless. She wore a short dress of grey homespun and thick laced boots. She had ridden astride in turn with the other women, and had shown no sign of fatigue. I began to perceive a new Alice who had eluded my analysis—a primitive woman, at heart unspoiled by cities, and I wondered whether in that mixed American blood of hers there might not be some virile drops inherited from pioneering ancestors.

She was the first to step upon our precarious raft. Mrs. Vernon, to whom the situation was not novel, became the mistress of the raft.

"Mrs. Dutton and I will sit down in the middle: Alice can stand in front, and you can paddle at the back," were her orders.

We pushed off from the shore, and were afloat upon the silent lake. In the immensity of this mountain scenery the lake was a mere cupful of water, very clear and still. All around rose the pathless woods, sloping down steeply to the lake, till, in the evening half-light, it was difficult to distinguish where the trees ended and the lake began. The whole mountain-side hung suspended in the water, so that we appeared to be floating on the tree-tops of a dark submerged world. At one point there rose a grey bastion of rock, beneath which the water lay deep and black, and it was toward this point I steered the raft.

Mrs. Dutton was perfectly correct when she stated that the lake swarmed with fish. The trout rose so fast, bit so eagerly, and made so poor a fight that

there was little sport in catching them. They had been left alone so long that they were totally unacquainted with the craft of man. It was more like a wholesale massacre of the innocents than sport. In a very short time we had a dozen beauties, quite as many as were needed for our supper. But we did not escape without the ducking that Mrs. Vernon prophesied. In landing a two-pounder Alice lost her balance, the raft gently tilted, and Mrs. Vernon slipped after her into the lake. Since it was impossible for them to climb back upon the raft, there was nothing for it but that they should swim ashore, which they did with much laughter and excitement. I followed them, paddling the raft with Mrs. Dutton, each of us pretty nearly as wet as though we also had been in the water.

"Thank heaven, I've brought some other clothes," said Mrs. Dutton gaily. "If we come here fishing tomorrow, I vote we wear our bathing suits."

Fortunately the water was not cold. It was almost tepid, for there was little current and it had been warmed by a long day of strong sunshine. It was nearly dark when we reached the shore. A few stars were in the sky, a wonderful clearness hung over the west, but elsewhere the soft gloom rested like a pall of velvet. Further down the valley shone the camp-fire, and we heard the voices of Dutton and Vernon, the dull thud of the mallet driving home the tent pegs and the sharp strokes of an axe splitting firewood.

That supper round the camp-fire was a thing unique

in my experience. I had the pleasant sense of realising by a sort of miracle the Crusoe-dreams of childhood. To be sitting round a camp-fire in the wilderness, with no human creature but ourselves within half a score of miles, thrilled me. That old life of shouting streets, hurried engagements, fevered ambitions, seemed not only far away but wholly unthinkable. The primitive man arose in me, the man of whose existence I had been unaware. I saw myself humbly following in the long procession of man's immemorial life upon the earth, which had existed before the birth of cities and perhaps would survive them; and I ceased to wonder that the oldest wisdom of the world was born in the hearts of men who dwelt in tents.

We sat long round the fire, sung in chorus old songs, talked of old memories. They were memories of England chiefly; I suppose it was the sharp contrast of the scene which evoked them. Vernon spoke with affection of the view of misty violet distances from Hampstead Heath, and Dutton of the splashing weir at Great Marlow, and I of boyish tramps through Epping Forest. It seemed we had all lived pretty close to one another in London without knowing it. Dutton had been educated at St. Paul's, and Vernon at the Merchant Tailors, and I at Highgate. We had perhaps passed one another in the streets, and certainly had sat not far from one another at the Christmas pantomime at Drury Lane, for we each recalled the quips and jests of Herbert Campbell and Dan

Leno. And here we were, flung out by various fates, gathered round a fire in the wilderness!

The thought brought with it a more real sense of comradeship than I had yet felt. I remembered, with some compunction, that I had been quick to observe Dutton's indolence, and Vernon's rather laboured suavity—all I remembered now was that we were of the same stock, and had been nursed upon the breasts of the same great mother. And the same emotion seized on me as I looked on Mrs. Dutton, with her childlike daintiness, and Mrs. Vernon with her air of London pertness, her Dresden-china prettiness. I saw now that there must be some harder fibre in them both, some underlying strength, which enabled them to make a jest of a life which involved so many social deprivations; for were not they also daughters of the same great Mother, who flung her children forth into so many strange paths and places, because she had such superb faith in their inherent courage? Alice Croxon had no precise place in these thoughts; yet she too had an English name, and a long way back —I knew not how far—there must have been a Croxon who crossed the grey Atlantic, and perhaps carved his new home out of just such a wilderness as this. At all events it pleased me to think this, and some day, if chance favoured me, I thought that I would ask her about it. So something like a real fellowship sprang up between us as we sat round the fire that night. It was the product of our complete isolation from all other human creatures. The silence, the dark woods and the vast night pressed against

us, drove us close together, making the hour sacramental.

About ten o'clock the air grew very cold, and the stars glittered with a wintry keenness. We were glad to crawl into our tents, where I made acquaintance with the extreme knobbliness of a bed which consisted of a horse-rug spread over a thin layer of balsam boughs. Sleep was impossible, not only by reason of the roughness of our bed, but because of the cold that grew more and more searching as the night went on. My wet feet added to my discomfort, and I had an amused vision of the horror with which my circumstances would have been regarded by those tender guardians of my boyhood, to whom the least dampness in my socks was a catastrophe, calling for hot mustard baths and camphor. From the women's tent a few yards from our own, came laughter and gay voices.

"How are you getting on?" we shouted.

"Splendidly," Mrs. Vernon called back. "Only Alice has just discovered the wood-axe underneath her head, and I believe there's a pack-rat running round."

"Why don't you call it a coyote," answered Vernon, "or a bear—that would be still more dramatic?"

"Well, it's something alive, anyhow."

"All right, I'll come and see," said Vernon.

"That you won't. We're only fooling," said Mrs. Vernon indignantly.

The voices ceased with surprising suddenness.

"Are there pack-rats here?" I asked.

"Very likely," said Vernon. "But they are quite harmless. They're jovial little sports, who spend the time carrying things from one place to another, and then carrying them back again."

"Like humans," said Dutton. "Don't we also run round and round and get nowhere too?"

"What's the matter—uncomfortable?" said Vernon.

"No, I'm only thinking, and I hate thinking in the dark, because I always think of the things I least want to think of. That's why I always read myself to sleep, and read the moment I wake up, too."

"I've had that experience," I said. "I wonder why it is that if you can't sleep you always think of all the unhappy things that have ever happened to you —never of the happy ones?"

"Suppose we tell each other just what we're thinking of," said Vernon. "It will help to pass the time. You begin, Waller."

"O, I was thinking of an old inn at Ludlow where I once stayed," I answered. "It had the biggest and the softest bed I ever slept on. The rooms were all oak-panelled, and the front of the house was a mass of carved oak, and the dining room had the royal arms above a wide stone chimney-place. I fell asleep wondering if Milton had slept in that bed when he came down to Ludlow to see his *Comus* played in the Castle. I imagine that it was the contrast between that wide four-post bed and this misdemeanour of a bed that recalled the memory."

"Which disproves your theory that when you can't sleep you think only of unhappy things," said Vernon.

"Now I was thinking of a school I went to when I was a kid, where, if your nails were black or you hadn't washed behind your ears, they decorated you with a card engraved with the word DIRTY, which they hung round your neck, and you had to wear it all day, and when you went into the playground the boys flung stones at you. It's queer, but I've never got over the shame of that experience, and I can still feel my face flush at its recollection. I suppose I thought of that just now because I'm undoubtedly grubby and very much in need of washing. Now it's your turn, Dutton. What unhappy thing are you thinking of?"

"The South African veldt," he replied. "There's a bitter wind that blows there at night, even after the hottest day. Well, there was a night——"

He stopped suddenly.

"Another instance of association," I said. "This bitter cold made you think of that, eh?"

He sat up, leaning on his elbow.

"No, it wasn't that," he said. "I don't know why I should tell you what it was, but perhaps you'll understand, and never mention it. It was in the Boer War. I went out with the C.I.V.'s, without the least idea of what I was going to. It's a God-forsaken land and I hated it from the first. It's all dust and rocks, and the Boers popped at you behind the rocks without giving you a chance. This eternal secrecy of their attack wore my nerves down, and what with the hard marching and the bad water I came very near enteric. Well, one evening, when I was at my worst, scarcely

able to sit my horse, we were suddenly attacked. Before I knew what I was doing I was riding madly across the veldt, not noticing where I was going. The sun went down, and in a few minutes it was dark. My horse fell. I had just time to save myself. I think I fainted. At all events when I recovered consciousness I found myself lying on the open veldt, quite alone, with a freezing wind searching through my thin khaki. I sat up. The world was empty of all life, and suddenly it came to me that I had lost my company. I had run away. I had run away—the words thundered through my brain. The stars knew all about it—they twinkled maliciously, like eyes that mocked me. Every one would know it soon. My folk in England would know it. I had run away. Well, that was the bitterest moment of my life: and it all comes back to me when I can't sleep. That's why I always read myself to sleep: I know if I don't that I shall be re-living to its last detail that awful night upon the veldt."

"Well," said Vernon, "I don't see why that should trouble you so much. I guess either of us would have done the same"—and from my heart I thanked the good simple fellow for his genial wisdom. The London clerk, whose most shameful memory was of a school humiliation long ago, had contrived to say the healing word which I had not the wit to utter.

"Do you think so" said Dutton with the eagerness of a reprimanded boy who looks doubtfully into the face of his censor, searching it for some gleam of sympathy and understanding.

"I'm sure of it," said Vernon.

"And I, too," I said.

"Well, that's a great comfort to me. You're good fellows to say it, and I only hope you mean it."

He lay down again and was soon asleep.

But for me sleep came slowly. I knew now the secret of that old look on Dutton's face, so tragically at variance with his boyish manners. An Inquisition was silently set up in my own soul, and I tortured myself with hypothetical dilemmas, of how I might or might not behave in conditions that demanded sudden courage. I slept at last, but in an uneasy fashion. The biting cold pierced the tent walls. Above my head there was a long rent in the canvas, through which I saw a star that shone with a bluish splendour. Toward four o'clock I woke and could sleep no more. I slipped out of the tent into the chill morning air. A white mist lay along the river and the trees were gemmed with moisture. I gathered fir-cones and pieces of old packing-cases, lit a fire and filled my kettle at the river.

As I came back from the river the flap of the women's tent was raised and Alice came out.

"I want some tea," she said plaintively.

"You shall have it in ten minutes," I replied.

"Good," she said, rubbing her chilled hands like an unhappy child.

The deep shadows still lay upon the Silver Lakes. There was no sound but the quiet ripple of the stream over its rocky bed. But already the magic of the dawn was working; the stars were paling, and from

the east a pure white radiance of essential light was flung up into the cloudless sky, and opened slowly outward like a fan.

VII

There is a singular intimacy in a meal shared by two persons in a solitary world. The fire, fed with fir-cones, soon burned with a clear brightness, the kettle sang, and the tea was made. The stillness of the world was so intense that we found ourselves speaking in whispers. No sound of life came from the two tents. We were as much alone as Adam and Eve in Eden, and we were as shyly conscious of each other as two children deserted by their elders.

"Shall we wake the others, and give them some tea" I asked.

She shook her head.

"I don't think they'd be grateful," she added with a smile.

"What do you say to a swim?"

"Yes, I should like that."

We found our bathing suits in one of the packs, and took the path that led to the lakes. Beside a broken weir, through which the water spouted into a crystal pool, I left her to undress; I went further on into the wood. When I came out of the wood I saw her standing on the runway of the weir, her hands lifted for the dive. From the lake a white mist was rising, blown softly to and fro like a muslin curtain by the breath of dawn. She looked curiously slight and

small, a kind of elfin child, with the mist round her feet like a white discarded garment. When she dived it was as though the mist swallowed her up. I swam out into the lake to meet her, guided by the sound of her movement, and the ripples on the water. We met in the middle of the lake, and swam silently side by side. We had often done this when bathing at Fruitvale, but always with a good deal of merry laughter; the strange thing in this swim was our silence. The word she had used about the heavy stillness of the woods recurred to me—it was "eerie." This was also "eerie." There was a sense of unseen eyes that watched us from the shores, of a mysterious isolation from all human life, but of closeness to other forms of life which were not discerned. And it was eerie, too, to find ourselves in little open spaces of dark water shut in by these moving walls of mist, or to pass through the yielding walls, with the friendly shore quite hidden, as if we had lost the solid habitable world, and were alone in the vacant infinite. I felt as though anything strange or supernatural might happen in such a scene at such an hour—the rising from the water of a white arm that waved the magic sword Excalibur, or the sudden passage of King Arthur's funeral barge, with men in armour rusted by the dew, and wailing trumpets uttering farewells.

The spell was broken by the rising of the sun. Through a gap in the mountains rushed the golden flood of dawn, and a long level lane of light was drawn across the lake. We swam into it, as into a lighted river. The mists disappeared instantaneously. A

heavy sigh ran through the woods, as of a sleeper who awakes, and a fresh breeze began to blow. A new day was born and Time saluted it with precious gifts of gold and frankincense, the gold of living light and the wind-blown fragrance of the kneeling forests.

We dressed rapidly, and then sat a long while on the broken weir, listening to the splashing of the water as it fell into the pool. After a time we began to talk, but still in low voices, as if we feared to awake some one. But our talk was restrained by that curious shyness which had grown up between us. Once only our thoughts moved freely. I had said something about it being good to be alive, when Alice surprised me by replying, "Extreme joy always makes me melancholy."

"But why?"

"With the fear that it can't last."

"Isn't that a very foolish fear?"

"Yes, I suppose it is. All fear is foolish, for that matter, because it doesn't alter anything. But I've never yet had a specially good time without making myself miserable with the idea that I'd have to pay for it some day. When I had birthdays as a child I always dreaded them, because I knew how flat and dull the day after the birthday would be."

"What an unhappy child you must have been!"

"No, not unhappy, but only apprehensive. I can never quite enjoy to-day because I'm apprehensive of to-morrow."

"And are you still apprehensive in that way?"

"Very often."

She looked at me shyly, as if afraid that she had said too much. And, as I looked back into her face, I understood that downward droop of the lips, which made her appear discontented. "Poor child; she also," I thought, "is suffering from the malady of the age—the fear born out of too much ease, the anemia of a life that has lost its edge, its natural daring——" I laid my hand on her cool hand and said, "But didn't life feel good when we were swimming? And can't you just take this glorious day for yours, and live it joyously?"

"I'll try," she said. And then, with a smile, "Of course, I will. And to begin with, I'm ferociously hungry, and I'm sure it's time for breakfast. I'm like that man in the Bible who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and I can't say I blame him. Won't you please find a mess of pottage for me?"

We rose and strolled slowly back to the camp. The tents still showed no signs of life. A thin spiral of smoke rose from the fire, spreading itself out into a tiny cloud which was caught like a veil of gossamer in the dew-spangled branches of the fir-trees. A gopher sat on a flat rock beside the river contemplating us with his inimitable air of timid curiosity.

"Suppose we get breakfast ready, just to surprise the others," I said.

"Yes. Let's do it. It'll be great fun. Only you must know I never cooked anything in my life."

"I'll teach you. It's time you learned."

"Thank you," she said with a mocking curtsey.

"I'll call you Sir Gareth. Let me see, how do the lines run?

> 'So Gareth all for glory underwent
> The sooty yoke of kitchen-vassalage.'"

"And you shall be Lynette.

> 'A damsel of high lineage and brow.
> May-blossom,—and lightly was her slender nose
> Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower."

"I'm sure my nose is not tip-tilted, and it's very rude of you to say it is."

"But your brow is may-blossom. The compliment atones for the insult."

"Sir Gareth," she replied with a low laugh, "you've missed your vocation. You're no scullion, and I believe you know no more of kitchen-vassalage than I do. You're nothing but a New York reporter satirising flappers at a pink tea."

"That shows a total ignorance of my abilities. I assure you, Lynette, that I can cook as well as any man in Fruitvale. And I'm going to teach you. My first order is that you get fir-cones for the fire, while I fill the kettle at the river."

It was a delightful bit of pantomime that we had hit upon, and it was delightful to see the way in which Alice entered into it. I had called her Lynette, but a better name would have been a Cinderella of the Woods. Her hair, loosened in swimming, fell in a dark mass upon her slender shoulders, and her bare feet were but partially concealed by an old pair of

canvas bathing shoes. She went into the wood, holding her dress high as an apron in which to collect the fir-cones, looking back at me from time to time with a mocking smile.

She returned presently, and flung the dry cones upon the fire, which immediately blazed up into clear flame.

"And what next, Sir Gareth?"

"Wash the dishes," I said severely. "They need it badly."

"And in the meantime, what are you going to do?"

"The pupil is not allowed to interrogate the master. It's against the rules."

"But I presume the master wishes to set a good example, doesn't he?"

"Gareth is so sure of his virtues that he feels no compulsion to exhibit them."

"Of course he is. How like a man!"

"I thought you admired him."

"I did until I saw his deficiencies.

"Lynette didn't see any."

"But he saw hers. He said her nose was tip-tilted. Really now do tell me, is my nose tip-tilted?"

She stooped to the pail of water I had brought from the river, and pretended to use it as a mirror.

"I'm really afraid it is, you know. Or is it only the water makes it look so?"

"It's the most adorable little nose in the world," I replied. "And now that you've extorted that compliment from me, will you please wash the dishes?"

"I suppose you think I can't. Well, you shall see."

She went to work at once, dipping the dishes in the

pail of water, and I wiped them as she handed them to me. The temptation of those slim hands so close to mine was too much for me. I stooped and kissed them.

"Is that part of the idyll?" she said demurely.

"Of our idyll," I replied.

"I didn't know it was an idyll," she replied with a blush. "I thought it was a game."

"So did Lynette, until she knew better," I ventured to retort.

"But I'm not Lynette, I'm only a washer of dishes. And, O, I'm so hungry."

"We'll soon remedy that. I'm going to fry the bacon."

"And I'll make the tea. That's quite within my very humble competence, you know."

The bacon was soon sizzling in the pan.

"Please give me a very large helping," she said. "I have a most primitive appetite."

"Don't you think we'd better wake the others? It's half-past six, you know."

"I'd rather not. I like it better with just you and me. Besides, I'm greedy, and I want a lot. I might not get as much if the others were here."

She laughed like a child engaged in a plot to cheat her elders.

"That, at all events, is a primitive temper," I said.

"O, I shall be civilised enough, presently, when I'm properly dressed. Let's make the most of the primitive while it lasts."

"I wish it could last forever."

"Forever is a big word. I'm content with the present. Aren't you?"

And I was. What was there better than to enjoy the present, and what greater folly than to discount the present by the threat of the future?

"After all, the present is all we really have," she said gravely. "Yesterday is dead and to-morrow is not born."

There came to us a noise of grumbling voices in the men's tent. Vernon and Dutton were awake.

"There ends our beautiful present," said Alice in a whisper. "I must go."

She rose from the log on which she was seated, and drew her dress round her bare feet. She stretched out her hands to me, and said, "You may kiss them now if you wish to. It's the last act in our little game —or idyll—which is it? What a pity it has to end so soon!"

"Why not think of it as beginning, not ending? And, Alice, it is for you to say whether it is a game or an idyll."

She shook her head and smiled.

We could hear Dutton threshing round the tent in search of his boots.

"Good-bye, Gareth," she whispered.

She moved cautiously toward the women's tent, and disappeared.

VIII

There are days that stand out in memory as peculiar and isolated by a sort of glorious intensity. It is as

though life ceased to be dispersed and became concentrated like a river that after long placidity flows with splendid violence in a glory of foam and singing water and sunlit depth.

That day at Silver Lakes was such a day. Youth and health, strength and happiness poured out their treasures for us. The discomforts of the night were soon forgotten and became a matter for happy jest. After breakfast we all swam in the lake, and then made preparations for an exploration of the mountains. At the back of our camp a rough trail led to some old mines, about six miles away. No one knew much about them, but there was at least the certainty of fine scenery, and Dutton professed some knowledge of a glacier hidden somewhere in the folds of the hills that lay behind the mines.

"I was there once," he said, "but I travelled by a trail that entered on the other side. However, what's it matter? We shall get a fine trip, and if we strike the glacier, so much the better."

"I'll tell you what we should do," said Vernon. "Let's take the horses and some food. I've been at the mines, and there are some old bunk houses there. We might sleep in them, and come back to-morrow."

This propostion was received with immediate favour. None of us were eager to sleep in a tent again, if we could avoid it, and, as Mrs. Vernon put it, "it always spoils the day when one has to hurry back at a certain hour. It makes one think of catching the only theatre train at midnight."

We laughed at the reminiscence: it seemed absurdly incongruous with the solitude of Silver Lakes.

"Did you often do that?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied with a grimace. "On penalty of being locked out. My father was a very pious man who didn't believe in latch-keys. He considered them immoral. He didn't really approve of theatres, but he was absolutely hostile to latch-keys. A daughter with a latch-key was the horrifying symbol of the whole revolt of woman."

"I wonder what he would say if he saw you now."

"The dear man's dead long ago," she said quietly. "And, do you know, I often try to picture him, but the only real picture I have is of him sitting up waiting for me when I came home from the theatre. He was generally reading, or pretending to, and he used to look up at me with a kind of indignant patience. I believe the thing I'm sorriest for when I remember him is that I so often kept him up at nights."

I had some similar memories, and should have revealed them had not Vernon at that moment arrived with the horses.

"Who wants to ride?" he asked. "Don't you, Alice?"

"Certainly not," she replied. "There's nothing an English woman can do that an American can't."

"Well, at all events you beat us all in getting up early."

She flushed at that, and turned the conversation by demanding a new lace for her boots. Vernon was at once upon his knees, lacing her boots for her.

"Good man," grinned Dutton. "A perfect knight of dames, isn't he?"

"Gareth and Lynette," said Alice. And then with a sly glance at me, "New version, you know."

"What do you mean by that?" said the innocent Vernon.

"Only a quotation," she replied. "Thank you. And now let us start."

The trail rose rapidly from the wet grass into open rocky country, where the sun beat on us with great strength. It was a relief to enter into woods, although the trail was here made difficult by fallen timber. Overhead the sky hung in what seemed torn blue ribbons, caught among the tree-tops. We went forward slowly, clambering over these slippery barriers, and it was wonderful to see how the horses took them. It was impossible to lead them; we had enough to do to take care of ourselves. But they never hesitated. They climbed like goats, always choosing the easiest way, and we were content to follow their superior wisdom. Every now and then they turned aside from the trail, in some boggy place, nosing through the undergrowth for some hidden spring which they knew was there. After a long while we worked our way out of the woods and came upon a steep slope, covered with the gigantic boulders of an ancient landslide. In a few moments we were at the top of the pass. Below us lay a narrow valley with a turbulent discoloured stream. At the end of the valley rose a confused mass of derricks and dreary heaps of refuse. This was the Lost Lode Mine.

Nothing more desolate could be conceived, and we regretted the green brightness of the Silver Lake valley which we had left. Here there was no greenness; the very trees were dead. They rose like regiments of skeletons, the witnesses of some ancient battle, fought out long ago with thunder and cyclone. A solitary eagle sailed above these murdered forests. We could see the loose twigs and branches of his nest upon a spiral crag of rock. Beyond the immediate walls of this solitary valley rose peak behind peak of bare rock, some grey, some olive-coloured, some wonderfully stained with rose and saffron. They were all pyramidal in form, and the rose-coloured ones seemed to tremble in the heat-haze, and appeared insubstantial as sun-saturated clouds. I had seen mountain scenery before in other lands, but nowhere had I seen mountains that gave such a sense of primeval vacancy as these. It was as though the very ribs of the earth itself stood exposed, the very framework of the world, unclothed by any beautiful illusion. The thrones of the last judgment might have been set in such a theatre, and one could fancy the ghosts of a thousand generations gathered there, waiting for the last trump.

It was early afternoon when we reached the mine-buildings. The mine itself was a hole in a vast precipice a thousand feet above us. To it ran a wire cable on which the tiny buckets of ore moved. The men actually working in the mine did not come down for weeks together. Food was carried to them by the same means that the ore came down. Their one con-

nection with the outer world was this aerial tramway. One could not but marvel at the restless energy and greed of men which had attacked this solitude in search of gain, and had dragged here by incalculable labour the masses of machinery necessary for his toil. One wondered also what were the thoughts of men, toiling in a tunnel of the mountain, higher than an eagle's eyrie, insignificant as flies upon a wall. A cool draught of wind blew among the mine buildings, and a loud stream clamoured.

But for youth and happiness solitude has no alarms; it is but a new variety of experience. We were glad to find no one there—no one, that is, but an old lame man, who had lived so long in silence that he appeared to have lost the faculty of speech. He had lived there all through the winter, and the one subject on which he had anything to say was the depth of the snow in January.

"Ten feet, it were," he said. "It's the deepest I have ever known;" and he spoke with a kind of pride, as though he were responsible for this unusual depth.

"Over the roofs of the houses," he added.

How did he live? "O, kep' a good fire going, eat, and slept—there was nothing else to do."

It seemed he had a daughter somewhere in Summerton. At least she was there when last he heard from her, and that was a year ago. She came to see him then, but he didn't expect her to come again. She wasn't strong, and the journey was over-long for her. His wife was dead long ago. He had no friends, and didn't seem to need them. He brightened a little

when Vernon said he had worked in the mines at Rossland for a season. He had been there, too. He had the air of a man who recalled with difficulty a recollection which had become remote and unreal.

"Did you ever work in these mines?" said Vernon.

"I've done such a thing," he said, as though he were confessing a fault. "But I *find* mines: that was my business before I went lame."

"Then you were a prospector, eh?"

"That's me. I've tramped all over this country. I've found mines that has made many a man rich. But they didn't make me rich. Somehow when I'd found a good prospect I always got tired of it, and wanted to move on and find another. That's me. I knew all about this mine years ago when no one else did. I didn't exactly find it, but I knew about it. That's why, when I went lame, they gave me the job of looking after things here. I've been here twelve years, and most likely I shall die here."

He shuffled off, and we saw no more of him. But before he went to his cabin he showed us the deserted bunk-house, and told us we might sleep there if we wished.

The bunk-house was in pretty fair condition, although the windows were broken and the door lacking. It was a long building of rough lumber. At one end was a rusty stove, and along its sides were the double shelves on which the men had slept. It bore an odd resemblance to the catacombs at Rome.

We soon filled the bunks with hay, of which there was a plentiful supply, lit the fire in the stove, and

had our meal ready. The night fell swiftly, for we were completely shut in by mountains. With the sinking of the sun the wind diminished, until the air was entirely still. To our surprise it was not cold as it was at Silver Lakes, although we were at least two thousand feet higher. The nearness of the mountains made the camp as snug as a house, wanting only a roof; or rather it had a roof of sky, perfectly blue and cloudless. We were in reality at the bottom of a gorge, which opened at one point only into a floor of sparse meadowland.

After supper we sat around the stove talking and presently began to sing. Vernon, who had a sweet light tenor, sang *Tom Bowling,* with a humorous allusion to the upper bunks which presented an admirable opportunity for going "aloft." Mrs. Vernon started "In the dear dead days beyond recall," which provoked memories of England. Then came *Swanee River,* which we sang in chorus. Alice had taken her seat on a box at the other side of the stove from me. She glanced at me from time to time, like a shy child. During the long day we had had no word together, and she had appeared to avoid me.

Our songs died down, and we sat silent. It had grown quite dark. In the broken doorway a little patch of starry heaven shone; from the open stove a pool of red light fell upon the floor. There was no other light.

Suddenly Alice sprang up with a cry.

"Look, what's that?" she said, pointing to the door.

We looked, and saw what appeared to be a white

ghost with trailing luminous robes glide past the door. Another followed and another. A faint crackling, as of broken twigs, filled the air. A pale radiance streamed in at the broken windows, filling the room with a kind of attenuated moonlight.

We ran to the door, and gazed down the gorge towards the little patch of meadowland. There the luminous ghosts marched in long procession. They separated, re-united, appeared to dance in an aerial minuet, disappeared only to appear again upon the high rocky bluffs, along which they passed to melt into the starry sky.

"The Aurora, by George!" cried Dutton. "Come out and look behind you."

Behind us rose the high bare mountains where the mine was, with one tiny light shining a thousand feet above us. The light moved to and fro. The men on that lonely shelf of rock appeared to be signalling.

Again the ghost-dance began. The white procession moved along the very summits of the mountains, and then swept down into the gorge. The light at the mine's mouth shone through the bright diaphanous mist, and seemed a jewel fastened upon robes of silver.

Then the whole scene changed. The ghost procession moved along the hills, thinned out and disappeared. Vast arcs of splendour bridged the northern sky. The whole heaven opened like a bursting flower of light. Long streamers, faintly stained with pink, were flung up into the topmost height of the firmament. Great wheels of light succeeded them, rolling along the hills like the chariots of an army. The edges

of the hills were defined as sharply as though etched in indigo upon a plate of steel. Fountains of fire rose at intervals, celestial geysers, flinging a foam of light into the sky, and dying down deliberately just as a geyser does when its strength is on the ebb. Then the ghosts began to walk once more. Their long filmy robes trailed across the world, clothing everything with phosphorescence such as one beholds in summer seas behind a vessel's wake. We watched the spectacle with a breathless awe. For two hours it continued, following the same programme of processional ghosts, arcs of light, geysers of spouting splendour, and then again the ghosts. It ceased as suddenly as it began. It was as though the hand of God hushed this revel of the heavens, and once more the familiar stars shone out upon the dark front of Night. The lamp, signalling from the mine, must have attracted the attention of the lame man. He came hobbling along the path, and called to us, "Did ye see it?"

We asked him if it appeared often.

"Not in early August," he answered. "No, I've never seen it so early in the year as this."

"What's it mean? Fine weather?" asked Dutton.

"It's an omen," he replied gravely.

"Of what?" said Dutton.

"That remains to be seen. But be sure it's an omen of something big and drefful."

He hobbled back to his solitary hut. But somehow his phrase stuck in the mind. The intense pleasure we had found in beauty gave place to a gravity of

apprehension which we made no effort to conceal. An omen—of what?

There was no possible reply.

I fell asleep with the old man's grim prophecy whispering at my ear, and through my dreams I still saw those ghost armies marching in their luminous processions.

IX

I woke suddenly with that shock of startled apprehension one has in a place totally unfamiliar, when the mind gropes to find its bearings. The Soul had gone away in sleep, God knows where, and was now knocking at the door of the body, eager to get in, as if pursued by the spectres of the Void. I sat up in my narrow bunk, gazed round, and very gradually perceived the outlines of reality. A grey light filled the bunk-house. Through the doorway and the broken windows I could see the paling stars. They went out one by one, like candles that burned down in their sockets.

I looked round the room. All the others were asleep. Vernon lay perfectly still upon his back, like an effigy of marble in some ancient Church. Dutton was curled up, with his face to the wall. Alice lay with one arm beneath her head, and the other hanging over the side of the bunk. In the next bunk lay Mrs. Dutton and Mrs. Vernon, face to face, with their arms entwined. Were their souls also far away, speeding on mystic errands, not yet aware of the recall to earth?

"She is not dead but sleepeth." The old sacred words, spoken by One who saw sleep where others saw death, came to my mind, but with a reversal of the sequence. "Not sleeping, but dead—What if this were true? What is death but the departure of the soul, and does not the soul leave us in sleep also? There came to me an overwhelming sense of the mystery of the thing we call life. I looked again at the faces of my comrades, and it seemed to me that I had never truly seen them before. If Vernon's face had the solemn dignity of a marble effigy in an ancient church, was it because some ancestor of his, centuries ago, had fought with Turk and Saracen? Perhaps: even the body of a London clerk is built up of heroic dust, and is the synthesis of centuries. And to what bourne had the souls of Mrs. Dutton and Mrs. Vernon passed? And then there was the face of Alice. Its outlines were sharpened by sleep. Sleep, like a great artist, had selected only its finest elements, and had composed them into a new picture. Trivial records of discontent were obliterated, and instead there was something that could be best described as pathetic majesty. And in the one hand, hanging so limply with extended fingers, there was pure pathos, the pathos of a childish helplessness. I had kissed those fingers in a gallantry that was half ironical a few hours ago: suddenly I knew that if ever I kissed them again it would be with a real homage. And while I looked the arm was lifted, and lay across the girlish breast, and her eyes opened.

She also gazed round on the unusual scene with

startled apprehension as I had done. My lips shaped her name in a soundless whisper, and she smiled at me. She slipped softly from her rough bed, and came across the room, moving toward the door. I followed her, and we stood silent, gazing out at that dew-washed morning world. Nothing was awake but ourselves—nothing but the eagle which we had seen the day before. He was sailing in wide curves in the upper air, where his wings caught the light of the sun that was not yet risen on us. I had the thought of asking her to come and bathe, as we had done on the previous day, but I was subtly aware of a new shyness which had sprung up between us. We were sharers, it was true, in a primitive community of life more intimate than yesterday's, and yet things were changed by an altered consciousness of one another. Did she feel, as I felt, that any new step in our relationship would be decisive? I wondered, and to my wonder there was joined a great yearning and a fear. Yet in the silence of that communion I realised that we had come much nearer to each other than in the glad frank comradeship of yesterday.

For some minutes—it may have been ten or fifteen —we stood in the doorway, gazing at the slow unfolding of the day. Her hair fell in a dark mass upon her shoulders, and I was aware of its fragrance. In many scenes, how different and long after, that perfume was to haunt me. I touched it timidly, with a great desire to kiss it, to bury my face in its soft abundance. She seemed to guess my thought, and moved a little away from me. Then she looked up,

and said in a whisper, "Go now—please." She turned back into the silent house, and I went down the valley to a place where the river broadened into a foaming pool, where I bathed. When I returned the fire was lit, and the breakfast ready.

After breakfast we set out upon our excursion to the glacier. The lame man gave us some general directions. There was no trail, but if we followed the stream we must reach the glacier, for the water was glacier water.

We soon found that there was a vast difference between the roughest kind of trail and no trail at all. We had left the horses at the bunk-house, and it was well that we had, for riding was impossible. We were at one moment climbing over huge boulders, at another wading ankle-deep in bog, or pushing our way through a tangled mass of undergrowth. Gradually we worked free of these obstacles and came out upon the open mountain side.

To add to our discomfort the nature of the day had altered, and the weather showed signs of change. A bluish haze, hot and stifling, filled the valleys. The sun hung like a disc of copper overhead. Over the summits of the mountains to the south-east, clouds of dazzling whiteness stood stationary. Across their white fronts grey wisps of vapour, thin as gossamer, moved slowly.

It was Vernon who called my attention to these signs of aerial commotion.

"That's thunder," he said.

I was walking with him at the time, a quarter of

a mile at least behind the rest of the party. Dutton was a few hundred yards ahead, and much further on, sharply defined against the sky, we could see the women.

"It's amazing how the women measure up to a job like this," he said. "They're as light on their feet as mountain goats. I've gone on a good many excursions of this kind with women, and I've always found they could wear the men down easily. I guess it's spirit that does it."

"It certainly isn't training," I said.

"O, you're thinking of Alice. So was I. It's wonderful how she takes hold of this sort of thing."

He looked at me curiously, and then added. "Do you mind if I ask you something about Alice?"

"Not at all," I said.

"Well, you see, she's our guest," he said in a tone of apology, "and it's easy to see you like her. I wondered if you did more than like her."

"I don't know, Vernon. But I don't mind telling you this much, I am thinking of her a great deal."

"That's why I spoke, and I should have done so before, only I didn't want to offend you. Do you mind if I tell you something about her?"

"I'm sure you'll only tell me good," I replied. "Go on."

"Well, what I wanted to say was this. I've a notion you think her people are wealthy. She gives that impression, you know."

"You mean by her manner, her style, and so forth?"

"Yes, that's it. Well, here's the truth. Her father

was a wealthy man up to about a year ago, and then all his affairs went smash. But Alice doesn't know that: he was at pains to conceal it from her. Before the smash came he sent her away on a round of visits. My wife knew the family; when she first came to America she was employed by them for a time as governess. She was not long with them, for I followed her from England, married her, and we came to Fruitvale. One day we had a letter from Alice's father, telling us of his financial embarrassments, and asking us to invite Alice to visit us, and keep her with us as long as we could. He thought that in a remote place like Fruitvale she would not be likely to hear of his misfortune, and he was resolved not to spoil her youth by telling her. I thought that rather fine of him, and, of course we were glad to have Alice, my wife especially, for she had always felt a strong attachment to her."

"And she doesn't know anything of this?"

"Nothing, so far as I am aware, though I sometimes wonder if she suspects anything."

"What's the justification for not telling her, Vernon?"

"Well, I don't know how to put it. But as I see it, it's something like this. She has to live the simple life here, and I'm in hope that she may get to like it so well that when she finds out she isn't wealthy she won't mind so much. She'll have found herself, don't you know, found out what real living is. Something like that, Waller."

"You're a good fellow, Vernon. And more than that you're a wise one," I said heartily.

"O, now," he said simply, "I'd hate you to think that I told you this just to be complimented. Only you've all sorts of brilliant prospects, haven't you? And I didn't want you to be deceived about Alice."

"That's all right, Vernon. I can truthfully say I'm not that sort of man. I've never once thought of Alice in connection with money. And do you know, what you say is a great help to me. It helps me to understand Alice, and it stirs my sympathy."

"That's why I told you. But come, we must go. The women are beckoning us."

We could see them standing on a crag that jutted out from the mountain wall, just at the point where the valley turned.

"I think they've sighted the glacier," said Vernon.

We pushed on rapidly, overtaking Dutton, and came to the sharp bend of the mountain where the women stood. They stood upon a rocky shelf, defended by a low parapet, which looked so like human masonry that it would have been easy to believe it was the outlook of some prehistoric sentinel. Immediately opposite was the glacier, a white frozen river forced between black precipices, and broken at the out-fall into a cascade of blue ice. It was not beautiful—it lacked proportion; but it was overwhelmingly impressive. There was something savage in the way in which the black sharp-toothed rocks ate their way into the ice. I could have thought this white mass a flock of sheep, close wedged by terror, torn and harried by fanged

wolf-like rocks. And the heavy sky aided this impression of savage terror.

The white clouds to the south-east had risen now, like a vaster world pushed up above our prostrate world. The summits only of these invading clouds kept their whiteness; the grey scarfs of vapour had thickened into lead, and the bases of the clouds were a lurid indigo. From the north-west other cloud masses moved to meet them. They came like a vast aerial fleet, driven before a gale. Suddenly, from their sides, fire flashed, as though some invisible Captain had given the signal for battle. A vivid blue flame ran across the glacier, a long jagged sword of fire descended from the zenith. Then, all at once, a tremendous wind came roaring down the valley, and the rain fell in a solid mass.

It was useless to seek shelter. All we could do was to huddle behind the parapet. The noise of wind and roaring water and detonating thunder, flung back in infinite reverberations from those granite walls, was so great that we could not hear ourselves speak. I was conscious that Vernon had hollowed his hands against my ear, and was saying something, but it was some minutes before I caught his words. They reached me at last. "Look at Alice," he said.

I looked, and saw her standing on the very edge of the rock-shelf, her unbound hair driven out in a straight mass before the wind, her hands uplifted, her clothes clinging to her so closely that every line of her body was distinct. Vernon nodded. He shouted

again through his hollowed hands. "Found herself"—I caught the words at last.

The mass of the cloud-burst had passed, and great silver rods of rain fell round her. The lightnings seemed actually to spill their fire upon her head. I watched amazed. Was this indeed Alice Croxon, daughter of Theodore Croxon of New York, ruined millionaire, bankrupt speculator—or a new Alice, re-created by the mountains, baptised with water at the font of the tempest, and with fire by the High-Priest of the Thunders?

In about half an hour the storm had moderated, but it was evident that the glory of the day was past. Masses of low cloud lay along the glacier, entirely concealing it. From the valley at our feet these cloud masses seemed to boil up like steam from a caldron.

"It's no use attempting to reach the glacier," said Vernon.

"Perhaps it will clear up," I said hopefully.

"Not to-day. When a storm gets into these narrow valleys it doesn't seem able to get out. We'd better get back before the weather grows worse."

"I don't see how it can be worse. Just look at us," laughed Mrs. Vernon.

And indeed the sight presented was so absurd that we all laughed. We were drenched to the skin, and looked as if we had been dragged through a river.

"Come, Alice," cried Mrs. Vernon, "we're going."

She made no reply. When at last she turned her head, we saw that her face was pale and her eyes blazing.

Although it was still early afternoon, it had become quite dark. What light there was had a livid quality, which had the effect of ghastliness.

"Come, Alice," called Mrs. Vernon impatiently. "We've no time to lose."

She came slowly towards us, then stopped and looked back, pointing to the mountains from whose heart the glacier flowed. We saw then what it was that filled her face with that strange ecstasy. For a few brief moments the tremendous summits thrust themselves up above the clouds, covered with new-fallen snow, glittering in the sun like crystal cones. It was quite literally an affair of moments: for while we gazed the clouds came together again like curtains drawn by an invisible stage-manager. It was a vision of beauty, so bodiless as it were, that I felt as though I had gazed for an awed instant on the ineffable loveliness of God himself. And I knew by that look upon the face of Alice that she also shared my thought.

She took her place silently at my side, and we began our return journey. It was high time to do so. The darkness had now settled down, the storm was rolling up again at our backs, and the lightnings were so near and constant that they seemed actually to run between our feet. The stream had become a torrent, and roared hoarsely in its course. We walked, silent as Indians, in single file, eagerly intent upon our path. With the river to guide us, we could not very well lose our way, but now every rock and log and steep slope was slippery with rain, and careful

walking was necessary. It was six o'clock as we turned the last bastion of the hills, and saw below us the huddled buildings of the camp. Just before we reached them Alice slipped a wet hand into mine, and said, "Hasn't it been glorious?"

"You've enjoyed it?"

"I never knew what enjoyment meant before. I think what it really means is not only that you're alive, but you *know* you're alive."

"But aren't you tired?"

"Not a bit. I believe I could turn round and do it all over again. But I will confess that I'm hungry. O my, how hungry I am. And I do believe that I smell coffee."

She laughed like a child, and ran ahead of me to the bunk-house, clapping her hands.

She was right about the coffee. The old lame man, with a thoughtfulness no one had given him credit for, had lit the stove, and met us at the door with a steaming can of coffee.

X

Vernon's weather-wisdom was justified. A thunder-storm upon the prairies passes on into illimitable distances, leaving behind it an atmosphere pure as crystal; but in the mountains it rages like a wild beast in a cage. It flings itself against the rocks in fury, battles for escape, and is continually flung back again defeated. All night we listened to its fierce assaults. The rain drummed upon the roof in an incessant up-

roar. The frail bunk-house trembled at the fearful detonations of the thunder. When we woke the next morning a heavy mist filled the narrow gorge, and the mountains were invisible.

"There's only one thing to do," said Vernon, "get back to the camp, and then home. It will make a pretty hard day's tramp, but we can do it."

We started immediately after breakfast. If any polite metropolitan had seen us, he would no doubt have pitied our condition, and have had certain wise remarks ready on the folly which misnamed hardship pleasure. But he would have been entirely mistaken. There is a joy in physical exertion which is its own exceeding great reward. Those who imagine perfect weather requisite to outdoor enjoyment have never known the real delight of rain. The misery of rain is only felt as long as you are trying desperately to keep dry; when once you are so wet that you cannot well be wetter there is an exquisite pleasure to be found in the freshness and coolness of the air, the fragrances that rise from soaked earth and grass, and the stinging buffets of the storm. So we were a laughing party, as we made our way to Silver Lakes.

"I call this real fun," said Alice. "Only I do wish my boots wouldn't squelch so. They make a noise like an elder's when he walks up the Church aisle to take a Sunday collection."

"And I wish petticoats had never been invented," said Mrs. Dutton.

"And I hold the same view about trousers," said Vernon. "I know now why Scotsmen wear kilts.

They are the invention of a country where it rains three hundred days a year."

"Don't you believe it," laughed Mrs. Vernon. "They wear them to show their legs. They're a form of pride."

"Well," said Mrs. Dutton plaintively, "I positively will not walk another yard in petticoats. Mine are so wet that I can't move. I vote we take them off."

This remark from quiet Mrs. Dutton excited great mirth.

"Well, I mean it," she said. "You men don't know what it's like to walk with yards and yards of wet clothes clinging to you."

"I call that sound sense," said Alice with a droll grimace. "You men walk on, and give us a chance. I'm going to take mine off."

They disappeared behind a rock, and we walked on to a bend in the trail, beyond which we waited for them.

"Do you think they'll do it?" said Dutton.

"They're ready to do anything," said Vernon. "It's amazing what spirits they have. They're like school-girls on a holiday."

And when they overtook us, they looked like school-girls, in their singular slimness, and they laughed like school-girls full of mischief.

"You see us in our habit as we do *not* live," mocked Alice. "I wish Fifth Avenue could see me."

Her tweed dress hung in a straight line, the rain sparkled in her hair and hung in bright drops upon her face. She looked an adorable child.

"I'll run you a race now, if you like," she said. "Who'll dare me?"

"What is the prize?" I asked.

"Don't be mercenary. It shows a bad heart. The reward is in the struggle, not the prize, as some one has said."

"All right, I'll race you to the big cedar yonder. Come on, let's all race."

She ran down the steep slope, light-footed and graceful as a fawn, and I after her. A bank of mist drifted across the path, leaving only the branches of the cedar visible. We plunged into it; and then, just as we reached our goal, she stumbled on a rolling stone, and I caught her in my arms. I held her for a moment only, for the others were close behind. But in that moment our eyes met, hers startled like a fawn's, mine eager with a new emotion. My lips sought her wet cheek.

"The prize?" I whispered.

"You've taken it. I didn't give it."

"Won't you give it, please?"

She laid her wet face for an instant against mine, with the innocent caress of a child, and immediately drew back. "Remember I won the race," she laughed.

"I've won something better—the prize," I said.

The others broke through the mist, Mrs. Vernon leading.

"Who's won?" she cried.

"It's a tie," I answered. "Isn't it, Alice?"

"It looks a little like it," she replied.

After that mirthful race we went upon our way

more soberly. The three women led most of the time; they did not walk so much as trip and dance down the trail. Dutton came last with the horses, on whose backs were our impedimenta—including the petticoats.

We reached Silver Lakes before noon. Our tents were blown down by the storm. We lit a fire with difficulty and fried our last eggs and bacon, made tea, and prepared for the last stage of our journey. The thunder still ran round the mountains like a withdrawing artillery fire. Soon after noon the clouds lifted, but there was no sun. The valley seemed deepened in colour, the forests were black, the lakes grey dulled mirrors in a frame of ebony. Overhead we saw the eagle we had seen the day before at the summit of the Lost Lode Mine. He hung motionless above the lakes, no doubt watching with those far-ranging eyes of his our every movement. There was something uncanny in this sense of being watched, and I pictured those eyes as cold, cruel, and deeply malignant.

We went back by the road we had come. It was nearing sunset when we came to the last bend of the road from which we saw the Fruitvale Lake. The sun was shining on it; evidently the storm had passed over Fruitvale, or had touched it only with its fringes. And over the northward end of the lake there was a vast span of rainbow. It rose like a bridge of light, uniting the two shores, built of jewelled splendour. It came like a beautiful climax to all that we had seen. It was like the soft diminishing harmony of a great

orchestra, the violin and harp after the loud blare of drums and trumpets.

About a mile from Fruitvale we came to Morrison's humble shack.

He was standing at the door with a paper in his hands. Among the flowers in his garden his little girl was playing.

"What's the news?" we shouted.

He came towards us waving the paper, and we noticed that his face was pale and serious.

"Terrible news," he said. "Yesterday war was declared between Great Britain and Germany."

It was the fifth day of August. While we had been hidden in the sanctuary of the mountains the whole world had burst into flame.

The War-eagle, with his cruel, cold, malignant eyes, had left his eyrie, and was abroad above the nations.

As for the Rainbow, that had vanished. The Eagle was sole lord of that wide sky, where the clouds were gathering with the presage of a night of tempest.

CHAPTER II

NEW YORK

I

"You must be neutral in word and thought," were the first words that greeted me when I returned to New York in September.

They were upon the lips of every one. They defined a national attitude. I read them in the newspapers, heard them reiterated in the pulpits, found them current among my friends. No one stopped to ask whether it was possible to be neutral in thought. No one was courageous or keen-witted enough to point out that the man who refuses to stand on the side of any defined principle has by that very refusal taken sides against it. The words were a convenient formula under which moral apathy and intellectual incompetence found cover.

New York betrayed by no outward sign her consciousness of world catastrophe. Groups of people gathered round the newspaper offices, scanning the bulletins of battles, but they were not larger and were much less eager than the crowds who studied the results of a baseball game. The restaurants were thronged, the theatres in full swing. The night-life

of the city flowed upon its course with even more than its old glitter, gaiety, profusion and reckless quest of pleasure. Her Babylonic towers sprang fire-crowned, flame-garlanded, into the affronted skies; her voice rose up into the night strong and clamant, passionate and self-sufficient. I had expected, at the least, a new gravity in men's thoughts: I found instead a deliberate intention to avoid gravity, to turn the eyes away from the vision of tragic realities.

There had been some days of real consternation in New York, so I gathered, when war broke out. Stocks had dropped and there was general apprehension. But the lords of finance had been quick to recognise in Europe's extremity America's opportunity. I found in the newspapers cheerful forecasts of the inevitable wealth that awaited neutral nations. The part of America appeared to be to sell her resources to the highest bidder. The more impoverished Europe grew the wealthier would America become. Of course America was not glad because Europe was at war, but it was not America's fault if war enriched her. And, besides, would not America play the part of a real benefactor if she fed and armed the Allied nations? Was not that a high and holy duty? And if the path of duty was the way of profit, so much the better for America.

Put in this way, the argument appears both base and hypocritical, but it must be said that very few people recognised its real character in the Fall of 1914. It appeared to be the verdict of sound sense, and was none the worst because it coincided with natural self-

ishness. But its ethical effect was disastrous. It ignored the moral issues involved. It ignored the fact that America, not less than England, was morally pledged to the defence of Belgium. It concentrated the mind of the people on self-advantage, and sanctioned this attitude by the counsel to be neutral in word and thought.

The first person I met on my return to New York was Herridge, the editor of the Magazine in which several of my stories had appeared. I had always liked Herridge, perhaps because he had shown a more than common liking for me. He was a tall man, approaching middle-age, with tired but keen eyes under heavy brows, and a firm humorous mouth. On my appearance in his office, he hustled out an artist who was showing him cover designs, dismissed his typist, and drew up his chair for a chat, with a significant glance, however, at his watch, which he placed conspicuously on his desk.

"Ten minutes," I laughed. "I understand."

"No," he said quizzically, "fifteen. I make a special allowance for returned wanderers from the wilderness, where, I believe, time has no value. Well, what have you brought me? A new story?"

"I am working on one. It's about half done."

"Good boy. I've observed that most men who say they go into the wilderness to write, do nothing of the kind. They simply loaf. And I'll tell you another thing; the best stories are always written in cities. Nature's too distracting."

"I didn't find Nature distracting, but certainly the war is."

"I don't see why, it isn't our war."

"But it's such a big thing it's bound to effect us all. I should think it would affect the circulation of the magazines."

"It will, but not in the way you think. I thought at first that it would smash us. But I've seen a great light. It'll do just the opposite, I believe."

"You mean, it'll give you all sorts of new material, war-stories and so forth?"

"No, that's just what I don't mean. This is the situation, as I see it. The papers will be full of war-material, of course, and they'll very soon overdo it. People will get tired of it, and that's where the magazine will score. I shall go on giving the public the best fiction I can, but not a word about the war. I reckon the general reader will soon be so sick of war-stuff that he'll—perhaps I should say she'll—turn with a new appetite to the table I spread. The old menu, you know; love, youth, marriage, a little delicate skirting of sex-problems, but not much, a good detective story now and then, and just a *soupçon* of verse."

"But don't you think that this intelligent general reader of yours will want you at least to show him you're aware there is a war?"

"My dear fellow, the general reader doesn't know there's a war, and he doesn't want to know. I've been in the middle West this summer, and, believe me, not one person in ten ever mentioned the war to me, and

the one who did wouldn't have done it unless I'd introduced the subject."

"Well, all I can say is that it's a most extraordinary condition of thought, or lack of thought."

"Not at all. It's perfectly natural. The people have been told on the highest authority to be neutral in word and thought, and that's just what they're doing. The way they interpret that very sane counsel is just to go on doing the things they've been accustomed to do—including, I hope, reading my magazine."

"But *you* don't take that view, do you?"

"I don't know but what I do.

'Ours not to reason why,
Ours but to swat the fly.'

By the way, that's one of George Henson's jokes. He got off a screed on it in *Maclean's* the other day, the effect of which was we're wiser looking after our own small moral sanitations than puddling in the garbage pails of Europe."

He looked at his watch significantly, and I rose to go.

"No, don't go," he said. "I haven't seen you for a long time, and I should really like a long talk with you. Especially as you don't seem to have the New York point of view about things, and it's essential you should get it as soon as possible."

"It doesn't seem to me, from what you've said, New York has got a point of view. It's simply blind."

"Now don't go off at a tangent, there's a good fel-

low. There may be more wisdom in blindness than you think. Didn't one of your own heroes, Nelson, use his blind eye upon things he didn't want to see?"

"He was blind to peril. America's——"

"O yes, I know what you're going to say. And I don't want you to start saying that kind of thing, because it won't do any good, and it will do you great harm. I'll tell you what, come to lunch with me at the Rochambeau. We'll meet a lot of the other fellows there, and you'll hear what they have to say. Just amuse yourself for ten minutes—I've an advertising man to see. I'll be back on time."

When Herridge left the room I went to the lofty window, and looked out on the vast confused magnificence of New York. It lay far beneath me, a medley of stony gulches, fissures and canyons, pinnacles and precipices, a thing so tremendous in its brutal indifference to beauty, its assertion of savage strength, its complete dedication to utility, that I ceased to wonder at its complacency. Here and there the eye distinguished the spire or dome that signified a spiritual ideal, but these spires and domes were everywhere out-soared and over-topped by the towers of commerce. I reflected that in a European city it was the Cathedral and the Campanile that dominated all lesser buildings; here it was the Metropolitan Life tower, and the towers that bore the names of Singer and Woolworth. How could a city so conceived be quick to respond to an unselfish idealism? And beyond these intricate lanes of houses, along which men moved like ants, there gleamed the salt water—no narrow

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channel over which an air-man could fly, but leagues on leagues of ocean, separating worlds. What wonder that the men of this ultimate city, so powerful and so isolated, should be incapable of recognising any menace of peril, or any thin voice of appealing comradeship that came as a mere whisper across the empty spaces of three thousand miles of sea?

Herridge interrupted my reflections with his cheerful invocation, "Come along to lunch," and we went down the elevator to the crowded streets. We walked down lower Fifth Avenue to the Rochambeau and found the usual crowd in the dining-room. Life was certainly unaltered here. I recognised the same faces at the same tables. The lager foamed in the tall glasses, corks popped, blue smoke arose from cigars and cigarettes, eager conversations were in process, gay hats nodded, and there was the swish of women's dresses and the delicate ripple of women's laughter on the air. Alphonse, my favourite waiter, hurried to greet me, assiduously cheerful. I remembered that he was French, and asked him what he thought about the war.

"It will be over by Christmas, Monsieur."

"Will you have to go?"

"There will be no need. The Germans, they are already in retreat. No, Monsieur, it will be over by Christmas."

At the table next to mine, I recognised a young fellow who was employed in the Russian Consular service. He had heard the remark of Alphonse, and nodded his head in pleased assent.

"We shall be in Berlin by Christmas," he said. "It is beyond doubt."

"You hear," said Herridge, as we sat down to our meal. "I am of the same opinion."

Herridge chose the lunch with the meticulous care which was characteristic of him. He was by no means a gourmand; but he had a cultivated taste in food and drink, and to-day he took special pains to please me. I had remarked long ago that when he did this he usually had some ulterior motive connected with his magazine, and by the time we reached our coffee I found his motive.

"How much have you done of your new novel?" he asked abruptly.

"About half—something like sixty thousand words."

"Well," he said, "I'm going to make you a proposition. I'll tell you frankly that I expected a serial from Grandison. I had the contract all ready for signature, but what must Grandison do but go off as special correspondent for the *Day-Star*. He begged me to let him off. It was very annoying, but of course I had no option. But that leaves me stranded. Here's the point. Let me see your manuscript, and if I find it's at all what I expect it to be, I'll be glad to sign up with you."

"But suppose I want to go as war-correspondent too. I've thought of it."

"My dear fellow, please put that idea out of your head. Your talent is much too rare to throw away on such a job as that. I'm not flattering you—I don't flatter anybody, but you can't help knowing that your

work is unusually good. At all events, I know it. Besides, you have heard my opinion about the war, and it is the opinion of most sensible men. It'll be over by Christmas. Germany can't possibly stand out for long against the great forces arrayed against her. It would be poor business for you to throw up all your prospects in New York to go off as war-correspondent, only to find you got to France too late to see anything of the fighting."

"Of course, if I thought that——"

"There's every reason why you should think it. And, if you won't be offended, I should like to add that I'm really giving you a chance that doesn't come very often to a young writer."

"I know that. And, believe me, I appreciate your kindness."

"Well, it isn't kindness altogether. An editor has to be guided by self-interest, and I'm not ashamed to say I need you badly. If you fail me, I don't know where to turn. And, look here; if I find your story suits me—and I've no doubt it will—I'll give you just the same terms I would have given Grandison. You know what they are: he gets a price as high as anybody in the front rank."

I will confess that I was a little amazed at this sudden good-fortune. Herridge had always been friendly to me, and his interest in my work was sincere. He had cheerfully taken short stories from me, but I had never expected he would accept a serial novel—at least, for several years. To step into Gran-

dison's place was to receive the accolade of magazine-dom.

Yet there was one disturbing thought that confronted me. Suppose, after all, this confident opinion that the war would end by Christmas proved false. How should I then stand with a contract for an uncompleted story on my hands? Apart from any question of work as a war-correspondent, which had been a vague hope rather than a fixed intention, might not circumstances arise which would make the fulfilment of my contract difficult, if not impossible?

"Don't think I'm ungrateful; I'm profoundly grateful," I said. "But I think you'll understand me when I say that I rather shrink from signing a contract for a story that is in large part unwritten."

"That needn't bother you," he answered cheerfully. "They all do it."

"But I'm a very slow worker."

"How slow?"

"Well, allowing that I'm about half through my novel, I've sixty thousand words still to write, and I should want six months at least.

"And what's the trouble? You've got six months, haven't you?"

"If the war doesn't interfere with my plans."

"O, damn the war," he said with a gesture of anger. "We're in America, thank God, and we are free to live our own lives. I have to edit my magazine, and you have to write your stories. I'm giving you a chance to do your best work in a way that will attract the most attention. I'm not afraid to take your story

half-written, and I don't see why you should hesitate. On your own showing all you want is six months for the work. Well, take that six months. It's not much in a life, but it may mean a lot to you. Take it, and let the world go hang. I tell you what I'd do, if I had the power: I'd lock you up in a room for six months, like Daudet's father did, and give you pen and ink, and let you hear not a word from the outside world till you'd done. Some day I'll get a law introduced in Congress, allowing editors to kidnap promising authors in the interests of literature, with permissive powers to thrash them if they fail to write less than five hundred words a day."

We rose from the table, laughing, and went out into the brilliant sunshine of the Avenue.

"Send your manuscript to me to-night and come to the office to-morrow at noon," he said. "I must taxi back now as fast as I can, for I've a pile of work waiting. Don't fail me."

"All right, I'll be there. And thank you, once more."

"We'll postpone our grace till after meat. It will be time enough to return thanks when the contract is signed."

As he stepped into the taxi he turned to me and said again, "Don't fail me. No excuses, you know."

I was aware of a certain veiled menace in his tone. With all his kindliness of disposition there was a definite hardness in Herridge which I had recognised long ago. It was one of the qualities, perhaps the chief, to which he owed his brilliant success. He knew how to

impose his will on others, not in any bullying way but by firm continuous pressure. He could be very patient in this species of compulsion, but if it failed he could be quite ruthless in discarding those who did not yield to it. I had known him labour with indefatigable patience and good humour with a writer to get him to alter his story in such a way as to suit the ideals of the Magazine; but if his efforts failed he never gave the delinquent another chance. From that hour the Magazine was closed to him, however good his work might be. And so I knew quite well what that little parting phrase, "No excuses," meant for me. I must take the chance he gave me, or make up my mind to incur not precisely his enmity but a perfectly civil, though quite positive, ostracism at his hands.

"Well, I have till to-morrow anyway to consider it," I reflected.

The great Avenue stretched before me, brilliant in the autumn glow, a great river of life flowing between high windowed cliffs, and in the long distance a bluish mist such as one sees on rivers in golden afternoons. The fascination of the city, which I had thought broken, came on me afresh; that subtle magic born out of the sense of multitude, of thronged lives each with its own drama, of relentless forces which wove and rewove with tireless artistry the woof of human destinies. I yielded to the magic and found pleasure in it. And, in this yielding, there was the sense that somehow my own humble destiny was being shaped by unseen forces.

II

I had intended looking up some of the men I knew, and dining with them at the Rochambeau that night, but about five o'clock a message reached me from my publisher, old Mr. Trafford, asking me to dine with him at his house.

Mr. Trafford was a remarkable man, for whom I had an affection almost filial. He had written a great deal himself and had a very delicate and discerning sense of literary values. With him, publishing was less a trade than a vocation, to which he brought very high ideals. He was now an old man, but still erect, active and very much in love with life. His fine grey head, dark deep-set eyes under bushy brows, and keen intellectual face would have attracted attention anywhere. He looked what he was, a thinker, who had parted with many illusions, not indeed without sadness, but without the customary reaction towards cynicism—a thinker who has lost faiths without losing faith.

I wish I could convey more clearly the impression made on me by Henry Trafford. It is relatively easy to catalogue his qualities,—his genial wisdom, his large tolerance, his humility and gentleness, and so forth: but a catalogue of qualities is not a character. The truth is there was something subtle in the man, a spiritual element, an effluence of personality, rare, elusive, not definable, yet always felt by all who came in contact with him. He was an eager and brilliant talker, yet I never knew him talk for display. He

knew more about Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions than many men who were justly ranked as experts, but he never spoke of them. He would sometimes sit silent during an entire evening while younger men talked, and yet when the evening ended one came away with an impression of his wisdom, the sense of a rare distinction in him which all the others lacked. His patience toward the younger men whom he loved to gather round him was quite beautiful. He treated them with more than consideration, with an implied belief in their talents which drew forth the best in them. In short, Henry Trafford was, in the most exacting sense of the word, a great gentleman, whose fineness was the perfect equipoise of many rare and great qualities, which reposed upon a base of solid strength and long experience.

The house in which he lived was one of the old New York houses to the east of Madison Avenue. It was narrow, dark, and a little dingy—a house whose best days were over. His family had often urged him to move to a more fashionable neighbourhood, or accept the New York substitute for a home in one of the great apartment houses which were rapidly encroaching on the neighbourhood, but he had been obdurate to these appeals. Forty years of residence in the old house had made him insensible to its defects, and had endeared it to him by many associations. In the large front room on the first floor, which he used as his library, he had written much; and he had a superstition, common among writers, that he could write nowhere else. He used to say, in his jesting way

which disguised serious conviction, that the ghosts of a thousand thoughts haunted this room, that it had a kind of aura of its own, that wise men and great thinkers whispered together in its corners, and were eager to communicate their wisdom to him when he sat down to write. Certainly many men of letters, whose names were famous, had foregathered there, and in their midnight conversations many a book had been born. This room was the sanctuary of the house, but all the other rooms were in keeping with it. Simplicity and austerity were the notes of the entire house. There was no furniture that was not necessary, but it was all good, solid and old-fashioned. The floors were bare and highly polished; rugs and carpets were absent; an old-fashioned silver candelabra still lit his dining table, and the only pictures on the walls were portraits of his parents, personal friends and literary celebrities.

He received me with his usual courtesy, and immediately after dinner we adjourned to his library. Although the night was warm, a cheerful fire of logs crackled on the hearth, and a small table, with a spirit stand and cigars, was drawn up before it.

"And now, my dear boy," he said, "I want you to talk to me about yourself. And first of all tell me what you have been writing during the summer."

I gave him a scenario of my story, at some length, and, of course, told him of the offer I had had that day from Herridge.

"Well, let's take the story first. I see it is a love-story, and that's all right. A love-story is the only

kind of story that fascinates all kinds of people, because the relation between a man and a woman is the only theme of enduring interest. Even to an old fellow like myself a love-story is always fascinating, partly, I suppose, because I've never got beyond the child's trick of romantic make-believe, the habit of imagining myself in romantic situations. And there's another reason too, which perhaps you won't appreciate—we old fellows are sometimes dreadfully afraid that we've missed the highest possibilities of love, and we want to see if you young fellows can tell us anything we don't know."

"What you don't know, we are not likely to discover," I replied.

"That does not follow at all. Man grows more curiously intricate with each generation, and finds new modes of expression. Browning, for example, was a much more intricate personality than Scott, and he loved in a way impossible to Scott. Love in the eighteenth century, and love among early Victorians, was a very different business from love with the Rossettis and the Swinburnes.

"However, that's not what I really want to say," he continued. "I want to say something that may perhaps offend you, though I hope it won't. I want to tell you that I'm not at all satisfied with the material of your work, though the work itself is so fine that I truly admire it."

"You mean the sort of people I picture."

"Yes, just that. You see, they're essentially little people. They live in New York, which with all its

boast of bigness contains more little people to the acre than any other city in the world."

"All great cities contain multitudes of little people, don't they?"

"Undoubtedly. But New York has a larger proportion of them, because New York hasn't got what so many European cities have, a big historic background. I rather think the meanest Londoner has a sense of empire: he's reminded of it in all he sees. And Paris has a dominant note of art as well as empire. Great minds are in it, and men in general know they are there. There are immemorial adorations, ideals, traditions, which create wide visions, large passions. The big men of New York are not the thinkers or the artists—they are the millionaires. In London the first place they take the stranger to is Westminster Abbey, in Paris it is the Pantheon, or perhaps the house of Victor Hugo: in New York it's upper Fifth Avenue, and the abnormal architectural monstrosities of the money-kings. Do you see what I mean? The writer who sets his scene in New York misses the inspiration of the only ideals that endure and are worth anything?"

"Herridge jumped at my story just because it was laid in New York," I replied.

"He would. He knows nothing better, and if you tried him with something better and bigger he wouldn't understand it. He's an editor, which means a caterer, and he has to consider the taste of his clients."

"Isn't the literary man also a caterer? He must

comply with the taste of his time if he wants to be read at all."

"The literary man, yes. The man of letters, the true artist, no. And, my dear boy, I've had hopes that it is with the latter, not the former, that you belong."

"Then you would wish me to refuse Herridge's offer?"

"No. I wouldn't say that. The story is written, and you may as well do the best you can with it. But what I want you to see is that you ought to be doing better things. You ought to take yourself seriously, and do work that is serious. And I have a special reason for saying this."

"What's the reason?"

"The times in which we live. The whole world is changing. This awful war is going to alter all the values of both life and literature. We're only at the beginning of it. Before it is over, the world, as we know it, will have disappeared, and we shall have to begin all over again. And depend upon it, you writers will have to write in a new way. Love-stories will be written in a new way. They won't be trivial flirtations and whisperings behind the palms at fashionable dances. They won't be the sensual escapades of much-married adventurers. They'll be as serious as sacrifice and as solemn as death!"

He rose, walked across the room, unlocked a drawer in an old-fashioned bureau, and came back to me with a tarnished brass button in his hand.

"Do you know what that is?" he asked.

It had stamped on it an eagle, and on the reverse side were the words, "Hyde and Gourien, New Orleans."

"That is a Confederate button," he said. "I cut it off the uniform of my best friend as he lay dying at Gettysburg. I fought under Robert Lee, and he was the greatest man I ever knew. If Lee were alive now and called me to the same conflict, I think I should go."

He raised the button to his lips, and put it back again in the bureau.

"I don't want you to think, however, that I'm not a good American to-day," he continued. "I've long ago been satisfied with the result of that contest, though my side lost. But what I do want to say is this: I saw the whole life of America dissolve in the great war, and a new America arise. The old easy forms of life disappeared, and they returned no more. War never leaves things as they were. This is going to be a far vaster war, and I know that it will change everything."

"Then you don't think it will be brief?"

"I don't. I think it will be long and terrible. I think before it is over we shall all be in it. It will attract all the haters of freedom on the one side, and all the lovers of freedom on the other. It can do no less."

"In that case, I should have to go."

"I know that. I'm glad you know it. But don't be hasty. If the call comes to you, be sure of it, it will come in a way that permits no denial. My most

earnest counsel to you is, wait for that hour—don't rush toward it."

He put his arm round my shoulders, as though he were a father defending his son from danger. I could not but notice his hand—the long fine, blue-veined hand of the scholar and the artist—and I found it difficult to imagine that it had ever fired a gun charged with brutal death. Henry Trafford, so gentle and urbane, flung with a host of shouting infuriated men into the red shambles of battle—firing blindly through the smoke with the rest, hoarse with anger, stooping with the sweat and blood of war upon his face to cut the button from the stained uniform of his dying comrade, kissing it perhaps as he had done an instant ago, and cursing bitterly as he kissed—the picture seemed incredible. And, as if he read my thought, he said quietly, "I waited till I had to go. I was not a coward, but I knew what it meant to my mother who was a widow, and I waited till she said 'Go.' And I knew in an imperfect way that all the fineness of the old southern life was doomed, and I wanted to cling to it as long as possible, in the hope that perhaps, after all, some miracle would save it. The miracle was not wrought, and so at last I went with the rest; and when it was all over my mother was dead, and my only brother was dead, too—— I dream of it still—the rage, the horror, the agony, and I wake with a sense of defilement, as though I dripped with blood, and I find my lips drawn back in an ugly snarl, like a wild beast's."

"Yet you would go again, in the same occasion?"

"I would, because the horror of the thing is the least thing about it. It's my physical fastidiousness that is conscious of defilement. But deep down in myself I know that my soul grew virile in those scenes. I got a grip on the big things of life—God, and duty and eternity. Perhaps this is the kind of gain which will come to the world out of this war—the world will find its soul again. And the writers will find their souls too."

He lit a cigar and sat silently smoking for some minutes. Presently he said with a smile, "I'm afraid I've prosed a good deal. I wanted you to talk about yourself, and I find I've done all the talking."

"I count it an honour that you've told me so much about yourself," I replied.

"Well, it's true I don't often talk about that part of my past to any one, but I wanted you to know it, although I can't exactly say why. I think my real reason must have been just to let you know that when I counselled you not to be hasty in thinking this war concerns you personally, you might understand that I was not what you young fellows call a slacker. That's the new word, isn't it?"

"No one would think of using such a word to you," I protested.

"O, I don't know about that. Human nature is rarely generous when its stronger passions are aroused. You may hear the word applied to yourself presently by some young hot-head to whom war is merely the most thrilling form of personal adventure. It will require a good deal of grace to go on your way in

silence, confident of your own motives—a good deal of courage too. I went through that experience, and I don't think I was the worse soldier when the hour really came. It's because I remember that experience I want you to promise me something."

"What is it?"

"Only this: promise me to take no step without consulting me. Your father's dead, and all your folk are in England, aren't they? I would like you to treat me as your father, if you don't mind. I have one qualification at least for that part, I love you very sincerely, my dear boy."

I put my hand in his, and the compact was made silently between us.

Walking back to my rooms that night under a clear sky full of stars, I got for the first time a sense of the deeper pulsations of American life—"the soul of the machine," the essential spiritual quality that lay behind the material appearances. Henry Trafford represented the soul of America. He was one of those who had fought for an ideal. It was of little consequence that it was a political ideal which had been proved wrong; right or wrong it had the power of inspiring self-sacrifice. Multitudes of men had been moved by the same kind of impulse. Did this capacity for dedication to an ideal still exist? Had fifty years of prosperity quite extinguished it? I could not believe it had. The soul of America might be stifled under the dust of the market place, but it would yet be a soul resurgent. The picture seized upon my mind of a vast hemisphere of sand over which hordes of

Arabs ride without a guess at the buried magnificence that lay beneath their feet; and of a wise scholar who rides ones day on the same beaten track, but stops, saying, "Dig here;" and behold, before the spades of his workers, there are revealed ancient temples, whose stones were worn by the feet of holy priests and devout worshippers, and whose frescoes are still fresh as when the painter flung down his brush forty centuries ago. Beneath the beaten roads of American materialism was there also a buried magnificence, a temple with a shrine?

"Neutral in word and thought"—that surely could not represent a people who had fought for liberty at Lexington, and for national unity at Gettysburg. It could not sum up the real spirit of a people whose enduring heroes were Washington and Lincoln. The phrase ignored the hidden temple beneath the desert dust, the buried magnificence beneath material reality.

I had heard two voices speak that day. The first proclaimed the war an unmeaning episode, which would be soon closed and forgotten. The second recognised in it a clash of principles which were so contradictory that they divided all mankind into two camps. Which was right? Who was the true prophet, Herridge with his facile optimism, declaring the war would end at Christmas, or Trafford with his reluctant intuition that it held forces which were irreconcilable, forces which rallied on the one side all lovers of liberty, and on the other all haters of freedom?

I could frame no definite reply to these questions.

Perhaps no reply was possible save that which time alone could give.

After all, was there any better wisdom than to wait for this reply of time?

This was the sum of Trafford's counsel to me. As I went to bed another of his favourite sayings flashed across my mind—"Learn to take short views of life. One can always see the next step without troubling himself about the far horizon."

The thought was comforting, and it rang the bell of sleep for me.

III

The next day was Friday, September 11th, 1914. At eight o'clock there was a knock at my door, and I rose to find the morning papers lying there. I opened the *Times*, and the first words that met my eye were "The Germans Defeated. Their Army in Full Retreat."

From the press telegrams, communications of correspondents and the leading article, I tried to gather the full significance of this announcement. From the tangle of words certain vivid pictures emerged, dramatic and unforgettable. I saw this immense grey host of conquering Germans suddenly arrested as a wave is arrested and dispersed by an indomitable rock. Its numbers were never less than eight to five, yet it had failed. One correspondent described what he had seen only four days earlier on the forenoon of September 6th. On that day the insignificant figure of the Kaiser

was clearly discerned upon a little hill almost within range of the French guns, dressed in the uniform of the white Cuirassiers, and wearing a silver helmet. Massed to right and left of him was a brilliant escort, waiting the word to conduct him into Nancy. That hour of triumph never came. On the evening of Wednesday September the ninth, Foch discovered the weakness of the German centre, and delivered the crushing blow which ended the battle of the Marne. The beaten Kaiser had taken refuge in Metz, and the fruit of his insane pride was one hundred and twenty thousand German dead and wounded. Paris was saved. France, whose decadence had been proclaimed with such sanctimonious unction and arrogant contempt, had met the Teuton host in open battle, and was victor.

I read and re-read these fragmentary details of the great battle, until incredulity gave way to something that resembled awe. "Eight to five," I repeated, "and those the best trained troops in Europe, already keyed up to the highest valour by a victorious invasion and advance—how could it have happened? The whole story, in spite of its wealth of rational explanation, suggested irresistibly some other will at work, against which the will of the imperial blasphemer of Potsdam was impotent. But there the fact stood, and there was only one inference that could be drawn from it—the German dream of conquest could not survive the Marne.

An immense load was lifted from my mind, and the words of Herridge and Alphonse filled my ears—"The war will end at Christmas."

I found the papers saying the same thing. The military experts predicted a swift retreat of German armies to German soil. They drew their parallels from the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, in which decisive victory in the open field was the dominating factor. They argued that a great invading host must maintain its power of invasion unchecked till its object is attained; once stopped and turned back disintegration was inevitable. The grim device of trench warfare which was to draw a line of underground defences from the sea to Switzerland, no one had foreseen, not even Germany. Germany had lost her mobility, her power of initiative, and according to all military science this was fatal. So I read, believing, for I had no knowledge by which to interrogate my belief; in which, had I known it, I was no worse off than the oracular experts themselves.

Another thing was clear too; I was now able to take up my literary work, free from the apprehension that I might be constrained to enlist. How real that apprehension was I did not know till it was suddenly removed. I knew now that I had not been truly happy since that day at Fruitvale when Morrison told me war was declared between England and Germany. I thought of Alan Joddrel, and imagined him once more on his ranch. I thought of Alice, and knew that she would be in New York before long, and I thought of the good time I would give her. My old life was miraculously restored to me, the tasks I loved, the purposes I planned, the love which had already whispered to me of hidden Paradises. I was as a man

released from the fear of death, who leaves the doctor's office with a sense that the whole world is fresh-illumined for him—every star brighter, every flower sweeter, every familiar aspect transfigured by a new intensity of colour.

It was not until this moment that I realised how much my imagination had been affected by the war. I had written nothing for a month, and when I had tried to do so my tiny stage had been grossly usurped by this larger drama, so full of wonder, of horror and of heroism. The tremendous drama of Mons had taken strong hold upon me. I had followed that magnificent retreat with absorbed vision. I had seen that little British force, outnumbered by six to one, fighting steadily through fourteen awful days and nights, opposing machine guns and rifles to the monstrous artillery of Germany, the men falling exhausted, only to rise again indomitable at the bugle-call, staggering half asleep along strange roads smashed with shrapnel, again and again seeing the solid wave of forty thousand foes hurled on them, wave behind wave in interminable ranks; packed together in burning villages like rats in a trap, yet always escaping at the last moment by a miracle; men technically defeated many times, but never conscious of defeat, and never acknowledging it—I had seen all that in my mind, and what wonder that I could not sit down to contrive the motions of my puppets on a paper stage? When I had doubted my ability to finish my book in six months, this was the unconfessed reason for my apprehension. I had not mentioned it to Herridge be-

cause he would not have understood it. He would have called it a stupid obsession, for to him the mind was a machine driven by the will, and any movement of sympathy or alarm which was allowed to disturb its accurate production was beyond his comprehension.

And now the obsession, if such it could be called, was removed. Mons was avenged by the Marne. The broken hosts of Germany were in retreat! The war would end by Christmas! And I was free to set up my little stage again, to arrange my puppets, to set my orchestra playing tunes, with flute and violin instead of brutal drum and angry trumpet! I could have shouted for joy, because I was once more an artist, asking of life no better thing than to be allowed to live as if the ideal were real.

Noon found me at Herridge's office.

A man I knew by sight, named Hausling, was just coming out. He had a big solid Teuton head, fair-haired and close-cropped, and a big solid Teuton body swollen by too much beer. He was an advertising agent, who had reason to make a business of suavity: but to-day his face was dark and his eyes angry. He favoured me with a most malignant scowl. He passed me by, and then came back and stood before me in an attitude of menace.

I took no notice, and was about to enter Herridge's office, when he seized my arm roughly, and stammered something about a damned Britisher.

"What's the matter with you?" I cried.

"It will be what's the matter with you before long," he retorted. "You are laughing at me and I will not

be laughed at. You shall pay for that laugh, my friend, and your damned nation shall pay too."

"Don't be a fool. Let me pass."

"And you call me fool, do you? You shall pay for that too!"

The man was shaken by rage. His big hands trembled and his eyes were on fire with passion. His insolence was so gross that I began to be angry too.

"Look here," I cried. "You had better let go of my arm and clear out. This is not Belgium, it's New York. Stand back or I'll make you."

"We Germans do what we please," he snarled.

"Yes, you did it in Belgium, didn't you? And a pretty thing you did. And now, thank God, you're getting your own back on the Marne."

He lifted his fist, and closed in on me like an infuriated bull. But I had not learned boxing for nothing at Oxford, and was well aware that big beery men make a pretty poor show with their fists. I got my blow in right beneath his chin, shouting, "Take that, you raper of women, you bully who cuts off children's hands and fights behind Belgian petticoats."

He went down like a sack of flour.

From the neighbouring desks a score of clerks looked up, and I heard a sound not at all neutral which resembled clapping. Herridge came running out at the row, asking what was the matter.

"Ask that filthy carcase on the floor," I answered.

"O, Hausling has been insulting you, has he? He tried it on with me too. I'm glad you punished him."

Hausling slowly gathered himself up, brushed the

dust from his clothes, and searched for the ruin of his broken eye-glasses. The fight had quite gone out of him. His face was mottled and blood was flowing from his chin. When he saw Herridge, I suppose business interests got the better of Teutonic rage, for he said heavily, "I abologise."

"Get out," said Herridge, "and don't come back. And you can tell your firm that unless they can send some one decent, I've done with them."

"That's a dangerous kind of beast," he continued, as we went into the office. "I suppose it's charitable to assume he's mad. There are a good many mad Germans in New York to-day."

"Over this morning's news, eh?"

"Precisely. They know they're beaten."

"Did Hausling acknowledge that?"

"Not he. He treated me to his views about German expansion, and assured me nothing in earth or heaven could hinder it. He also remarked that God was on their side."

"God isn't to be congratulated on the company he keeps then."

"O, for that matter every nation says much the same thing when it goes to war. Man makes God in his own image, you know. I think I told Hausling that as a representative of God he cut a rather poor figure."

"And then he slanged you?"

"No, it wasn't that altogether. He saw the morning papers on my desk with the account of the victory on the Marne, and I guess the headlines infuriated

him. He cursed your country up hill and down dale because she had come into the war when she wasn't expected. I suppose when he saw you that was the last straw which upset his balance. Upon the whole I'm rather glad you knocked him down, for I was strongly tempted to do it myself."

"That wasn't being altogether neutral in word and thought, was it?" I laughed.

"O, I'm strictly neutral about the war itself, I assure you. But this was a personal affair. I don't like Germans. The best are drunk with egoism and the others are vulgar bullies. Hausling belongs to the latter class."

"I wonder whether anybody likes them. I know I don't."

"I rather think that's the root of the trouble with them. They've done all sorts of wonderful things in the way of organisation and efficiency. They've built up a great empire out of the poorest sort of materials. At the end of it all they find no one loves them, and they have to be content with be-lauding each other as the greatest people on the earth. They're suffering from hurt vanity. They want the world to acknowledge their virtues and instead the world treats them as beastly nuisances."

"Nations surely don't go to war because of hurt vanity?"

"Don't they. Read your history, and you'll find that half the wars of the world have been occasioned by just this and nothing else. Emperors are jealous, diplomats are touchy, slights are magnified into insults,

inadvertencies in etiquette are interpreted as national affronts—and then one day a little wind of rage fans these smouldering rubbish heaps of envy and uncharitableness, and the fire of war blazes up. I thank God, as I told you the other day, that we Americans are outside this devilish maelstrom of European jealousies. And now I thank God for another thing, the whole diabolic business is in collapse, and the end of the war's in sight."

"You really think the Marne settled it, do you?"

"Undoubtedly. Germany's shot her bolt and missed the target. You saw how that fellow Hausling apologised the moment he was knocked down. That's what Germany will do. Like Hausling, she'll awake to a sense of her business interests, and smother her resentment."

He rose abruptly, went to his safe, and took from it some papers.

"Upon my soul," he said. "I'd almost forgotten the agreement. That's another grudge I have against Hausling, he's robbed me of half an hour of valuable time and made me late for lunch. Well, I've read your story, and I needn't say I like it. Here's the agreement in duplicate. Just read it through. I presume you are ready to sign it."

"Yes," I said, "I'm quite ready. I hesitated yesterday because I was afraid to tie myself to a six months' job, but to-day's news has removed that fear."

"It's removed a little fear from my mind too, for you're such an erratic fellow I wasn't at all sure you

wouldn't throw me over if the war-fever got hold of you."

"I'm still a little afraid of writing under compulsion. Do you know I haven't written a line for a month, simply because my mind has been stultified by the war?"

"Well, you'll write all the better on the rebound. The war won't distress you any more, for it's as good as finished. You'll find the relief to your mind will release your imagination, and you'll write better and faster than you ever did."

"Yes, I think that too. Ever since I read this morning's news I've had a strong impulse to start writing. My only trouble is to find a quiet place to write in. New York isn't Fruitvale, you know."

"Well, I guess we can meet that want without difficulty. I'll give you a room in the building if you like—it's as quiet as a bird's nest in a tree. Or you can come down to my place on Long Island. I'm away all day, and you're welcome to use my house as you like."

"That's awfully good of you, Herridge."

"Not at all. Just plain self-interest again. I want the very best work you can do, for you're a new man to my readers, and my reputation is at stake as well as yours. I'd really like you to think of me as a kind of partner in this job."

"It's a great thing to have an editor who believes in you, and I appreciate it. I believe half the books fail because publishers don't believe in their authors."

"You'll not have cause to blame me on that score.

I'm not an emotional person, and the other day I heard a man describing me as 'A dry stick.' Perhaps I am. But I will be indiscreet enough to confess a real liking for both you and your work—only don't hold that against me when I criticise your story with a brutal frankness, as I very likely shall before you're through with it."

So the agreement was signed. I was to deliver the first instalment of the story immediately, and the complete manuscript in six months. The terms were far more generous than I had any right to expect. Herridge might go on asserting that his master principle was self-interest, but certainly he had served my interests in a way that indicated real friendship. I was assured of an income far beyond any I had yet enjoyed, and as I left the office a new thought whispered in my mind—I might now marry Alice Croxon, if she would have me.

What happier hour can come to any young man than that which unites recognition of his work with the hope of love? The room "quiet as a bird's nest in a tree," in that great office building, or the borrowed house at Long Island, were well enough, but I saw a better vision of a house that was my own, humble it might be as the shack at Fruitvale—but my own, with one dear face that brought sunlight into every room. And I saw a desk before a window, commanding great breadths of green forest and shining water, and an indefatigable hand piling up the sheets of manuscript in which my thoughts had taken shape, and perhaps—who knew?—a gentle critic standing by my chair, with

the perfume of youth and summer in her hair and dress.

It was a marvellous day, this eleventh of September. It was my red-letter day, and what matter if it was Friday? I had always found my luck in odd numbers and suspected days. This was my luckiest day of all, and New York seemed to know it, for never were the streets more bright with sunshine, and not for many weeks had the faces one met been so cheerfully elate.

IV

I soon found reason to congratulate myself that I had not availed myself of the room in the office building or the house on Long Island which Herridge had obligingly offered me. In either case I should have put myself not only under obligation to Herridge but under his tutelage. He had promised to criticise my work with brutal frankness, and it was not long before he showed his hand.

He began with a long didactic letter, very carefully and even brilliantly composed, in which he declared what might have been called the creed of an editor. He used with great effect his former image of a menu, which must be carefully composed to titillate the taste and capture the appetite of the general reader. The general reader, as he imagined him, was a person of profound ignorance thinly veneered with conventional prejudice, which he mistook for culture. He had no idea of being instructed, and read a magazine for no

such purpose, being perfectly assured that he already knew everything that was worth knowing. His general idea of moral drama did not rise above the tragedy of Punch and Judy. Any drama that was more complicated in motive and action only puzzled him, and often enraged him to the point of refusing to read the Magazine, which was a calamity the faithful editor must avoid at all costs.

I laughed a good deal over this letter, but soon I found that it was no laughing matter. No sooner had Herridge read my incomplete story than he summoned me to repeated interviews in which his tactics of continuous pressure were brought into play. He was always friendly, often humorous, at the worst anxiously civil; he stated his points with precision and patience; but he was quite imperturbable in his belief that his judgment was right, and any contradiction of his views a childish ignorance. It seemed he took particular exception to everything that he called "fine writing." Poetic metaphors annoyed him. Descriptions of sunrises and sunsets enraged him. They delayed the narrative. What he wanted, or, as he was careful to put it, what the general reader wanted, was quick action. Something must happen in every chapter. Each instalment must end on a climax. The story must keep the reader guessing. It was of no consequence that such a story was not in the least like life, in which drama develops slowly from a multitude of obscure causes; this was the magazine reader's idea of life, and since he paid the price he had a right to call the tune.

"You remind me of nothing so much," I cried at last in exasperation, "as the classic exclamation of old Astley who ran a circus in London. One day he attended a rehearsal of his hosts, who were engaged in dialogue. He listened with impatience, and at last shouted angrily, "For God's sake, cut the cackle and bring out the 'osses."

"And a very wise criticism too," he retorted.

"For a circus," I protested, "but not for a novel."

"For any kind of drama, whether acted or written," he replied.

"Read the great novels—there's your refutation," I retorted.

"I've read them, and will you venture to tell me that Scott isn't slow, and Thackeray tedious, and Dickens dull? You couldn't run either of them in a modern magazine, and you know it."

"I suppose you think you could edit them with advantage?"

"I certainly could—with a blue pencil. I'd cut them down by half, and they'd be all the better for it. This adulation of the older writers is only a tradition. They'd the luck to write when they'd the field to themselves, and that's why they've become classics. I don't say they weren't great writers—they were; but they're no models for to-day. They lived in the tallow-candle and the stage-coach days; we live in the electric era. You don't tell me the world revolves on its axis every twenty-four hours just the same as it did in the days of Scott. Not a bit of it. You bet it's doing it in

six, and the old stars are racing like mad to keep the pace."

Of course I laughed, but nevertheless I was irritated. He couldn't reject my story—I knew that; but this perpetual nagging at my style and method robbed me of my confidence. I found myself stopping, as I wrote, over every metaphor, and saying, "Herridge won't like that." He became a sort of sneering Mephistopheles, looking over my shoulder, whispering detraction and ruining my invention. I think he came to see that the thing he wanted me to do was not likely to be attained by the means he used. One day he said wearily, "We don't seem to hit it very well, do we? And yet I know your work is good somehow. I'll make a bargain with you. Go away for two months, and write just as you like. Choose some quiet place, and don't come to see me. Maybe, when we do meet we'll get closer together in our views. I'll only ask you to remember one thing: I've as big an interest in your success as you have, and do try to let my experience guide you, as far as you can make it possible."

This was a generous concession, and it was also wise counsel. I have always needed quietude to write my best. And I don't mean by that the kind of quiet you get in the heart of a great city if you search for it, but the real isolation and detachment from the throng that you find in loneliness. That is why I loved Fruitvale so much, why I wrote with such delightful ease there. I had nothing to look at but the calm procession of the hours, from the earliest robed in gold to

the latest clothed in purple. I heard no sound but the soft sandals of Time moving through green woods, and the silence was sometimes so intense that one almost heard the heavens moving overhead. And when the moon rose it was less the moon that rose than the earth that swung upward like a silent ship, beautifully buoyant, irresistibly propelled upon the seas of air.

There was no Fruitvale near New York, but chance, which has so often favoured me, gave me something that resembled it in its remoteness from the central tides of life.

I had noticed more than once in Herridge's office a tall fair-haired girl who read proofs for him and did occasional secretarial work. She was dressed with a little less than typical American neatness, but always with good taste, and she had a freshness of complexion rare in American women. One day, when I was waiting for Herridge, I found her reading the proofs of my story, and she looked up with a charming flush of embarrassment.

"May I say that I like your story very much?" she said.

"I am delighted that you should. It doesn't altogether please Mr. Herridge, you know."

She smiled, and I was struck by the beauty of her eyes. They were of a peculiar shade of hazel, very clear and candid, rather wide apart, under finely arched brows. Her face was not beautiful, but it was honest and good, and her smile was winning.

"I'm English, you know, and perhaps that's why I

appreciate some things in your story that Mr. Herridge can't."

"You're English," I exclaimed. "Why didn't you tell me before?"

"I've never had the opportunity," she said demurely.

Herridge was a long time coming, and it was natural that we should fall into conversation. By degrees I drew from her her simple story. Her name was Grace Lorimer, and her father had come to the States to take a position in a chemical manufactory two years earlier. He was a delicate man, and his first American winter had killed him. There was another sister, Mary, who lived at home with her mother, and there was one brother who remained in England and had enlisted when the war broke out. The mother and the two sisters lived in a little town called Oakwood, at the base of the New Jersey hills. The house had been bought by Mr. Lorimer, who found its solitude attractive, for it was surrounded by fine woods, which recalled Surrey, the part of England which he knew best and loved most. When he died the widow did not care to sell or let the house, although it was much too expensive for her means. It was to her grieved heart the only bit of England left to her, because her husband had lived in it.

By various stages I came to know Grace Lorimer more intimately. I found her intelligent, though not cultured: sympathetic in a modest womanly way with my literary ideals, without any pretension to comprehend them in any blue-stocking fashion.

One day, as I was leaving the office she said to me shyly, "May I say something to you?"

"Why certainly. Is it some error in my proofs you have discovered?"

"No, it's quite another matter. I told you all about the place where we live, and I wondered whether you'd like to come there to do your writing. We're not well off, as you know, and mother has often said she would like to have a lodger. The house is much too big for us, and there's lots of room in it. I've wanted to say this for some time, but I've been ashamed to do so. I thought you might think it presumptuous, and besides——"

She flushed, and I understood her unuttered thought. She feared I might misjudge her motive, but I had only to gaze into those perfectly frank eyes of hers to know that she was thinking a good deal more about her mother than about me.

"You needn't be ashamed," I said. "And you needn't talk of presumption. I am grateful that you should have thought so kindly of me."

"Well, you see," she said with a smile, "I'm still English enough to be a little ashamed of having to let lodgings, and I'm not snob enough to call the thing taking "a paying guest." America has taught me one thing pretty thoroughly—to be practical; and this is a practical matter. I want you to see it in that light and in no other."

"Let us be severely practical then. And suppose, to begin with, you come to lunch with me, and give me accurate details about Oakwood."

"I don't know whether I ought to do that," she said timidly..

"An American girl wouldn't hesitate, and you're learning American practicality," I laughed.

"Very well," she said. "Only please don't take me to any fashionable place. My clothes are not quite what I would wish."

We went to a quiet little Italian restaurant near Twenty-third Street, whose very humble Bohemianism rather shocked her. I gathered that she was accustomed to those white-tiled refectories where people eat off marble tables, and that her luncheon was the usual woman's meal of bakery products and a glass of milk. She certainly needed not to fear comparison with the women who lunched at Gonzali's. She shone among them like a fair flower among weeds. Her good fresh-coloured face had a wholesomeness in striking contrast with the yellow pallor of the Italian women, and the powdered faces of the New York women.

Of course we fell to talking about England, and this put her at her ease. She had lived the usual life of the middle-class English girl of the better class—Mudie's Library, lawn-tennis, a holiday in Switzerland, a day at Henley Regatta, an occasional visit to London and its theatres—a domestic life of plain duties and placid pleasures; and then the sudden exodus to America, dictated partly by her father's health, partly by the offer of a much more lucrative position than he enjoyed in England. The discovery of Oakwood was quite fortuitous. The family had to live

somewhere, and, in their total ignorance of America, one locality was as good as another. The accident of a motor-ride, of an old red-brick house behind tall maples, of an obliging agent who was an expert in business eloquence, and the house was theirs.

"It's really very pleasant," she said. "And father was quite right in seeing something English in it. After seeing nothing but tall apartment houses in New York, and wooden houses in the country, the red bricks were a souvenir of home. He bought it for the sake of the red bricks. But you must come and see it for yourself."

"Isn't it rather a long way out?" I asked.

"About an hour. I should have thought that a tremendous distance in England, but somehow I never think of it here. For that matter, I'd rather go twice the distance than live in New York."

And then she added with a touch of passion that brought the flash of tears into her eyes, "I hate New York. I couldn't live without the sight of trees and flowers. However tired I am when I get home, I'm refreshed the moment that I see the trees. It's like a bath for the mind. And the flowers are like wine—they make you forget."

In the words so simply spoken, I read all the tragedy of exile. I, too, had felt it, especially in my first months in New York, when I was training myself to forget, trying to persuade myself that New York was another London, and knowing all the time that it was a city more foreign to me than Paris, and with as little appeal to the affections as Pekin. All at once I found

myself sharing Lorimer's point of view; a red-brick house with lawns and woods was a paradisal vision, because it seemed a bit of England. Hither my destiny led; it pointed to it with a gesture alluring and imperative.

We parted at the office with a promise that I would come to Oakwood the next evening.

"Come to dinner," she said. "And since you don't know how to get there I must be immodest enough to ask you to go out with me."

The next night we descended into a noisome hole in the earth, got into a waiting train at Hoboken, flashed across the olive-grey Jersey meadows, and came at last to a little country station. Great hanging woods rose to the westward, a cliff of woods rose to the north, a dusty road ran at its base. We took the road, under a sky of emerald green washed with pale gold, and came at the end of half a mile to the red-brick house among the yellowing maples.

CHAPTER III

THE HOUSE IN THE WOOD

I

A NEW life began for me when I went to live at Oakwood. I had been suddenly withdrawn from a place of great tumult and had found peace, much as one lifts the heavy leather curtain at the porch of a Cathedral, and passes from the clamour of the market-place into the sacred silences of immemorial tranquillity.

It was on Thanksgiving Day that I took up my residence with the Lorimers. The Indian summer still lingered. A thin powder of snow lay on the edges of the woods, but the woods still retained some of the pageantry of autumn, like a ragged ribbon of dimmed gold and purple drawn round the limbs of a cripple. New York seemed very far away. From the top of the wooded hills I could see its white towers rise ghostly through a faint haze, and at night its lights glittered against the sky; but for me the vision was like a lighted city which seamen behold along a shore distant from them, inaccessible and undesired.

At first my relations with the Lorimers were a little difficult. I had the sense of intrusion. Everything

that a cold friendliness could accomplish to set me at my ease was done, but it was clear that Mrs. Lorimer found it hard to reconcile herself to my presence in the house. She was naturally reticent, with a great deal of wholesome pride about her, not at all the pride that apes gentility, but the pride of independence. English people have usually very strict ideas about the privacy of the home. I think it hurt Mrs. Lorimer that a stranger's eyes should look upon the intimately personal things of her home—for instance the portrait of her husband that hung over the mantel in the dining-room and the photograph of her son Charles in his uniform, and some little water-colour sketches of her two girls as children in short frocks in a seaside garden. I was undiscerning enough to ask some thoughtless questions about these sketches the first night I was there, and I noticed that the next day they were removed.

Of Mary Lorimer—the other sister—I shall have more to say later; I will content myself at present with a rapid portrait. Like her sister Grace she was tall, with a singularly perfect figure, but in all other respects she was entirely different. Her hair was dark and abundant, piled in a great mass across a low forehead. Her eye-brows matched her hair, black straight lines drawn heavily, as by a careless artist. Her face carried out this impression of careless artistry as though Nature had begun to fashion a fine design, but had grown tired, and had ended in blunt uneven lines. Her sole facial beauty was her eyes; these were very dark, with an indescribable effect of smouldering

fire. She had a disconcerting habit of fixing these eyes on you, with a kind of sullen questioning, and withdrawing her gaze suddenly as if in scorn of what she found.

At first I supposed that her sullenness was simply resentment at my intrusion; later on I came to see that it was of a much broader quality. It was resentment against many things in life, resentment, in a sense, of life itself. It was pride, scorn, sorrow, unequally combined, and at the back of it all a plain woman's bitterness in the knowledge of her plainness. She had some of the qualities of mind and character that make men notable; she had some of the separate qualities that make women beautiful; but these qualities were not in combination but collision, and she was aware of her misfortune.

However, I was only too glad to find a refuge in which I could do my work, and was not disposed to be critical. I had a delightful room, facing the wooded heights, in which I worked. I was no longer pestered with the mischievous pedantries of Herridge. My mind plunged deep in my theme, and my imagination began to move again with freedom. Grace Lorimer came home from the city every night, bringing with her cheerfulness and a gift of creating pleasure. As the nights grew colder we sat round a log-fire after dinner, and began to find a real intercourse.

I had escaped from Herridge. I had found a place in which I could write; but I soon discovered that I had not escaped from the vision of War. The photograph of young Charles Lorimer in his uniform was

a perpetual reminder of its tragedy. The eyes of Mrs. Lorimer were often fixed upon it; indeed they never left it. Letters and papers for the Lorimers from England arrived regularly, and the latter I read with eager interest.

The battle of the Aisne had followed the Marne, and I had begun to see that the war was very far from over. I read of recruiting, and always more recruiting;-of Oxford and Cambridge denuded of both graduates and professors; of troops leaving and the long trains of wounded men returning; of the whole nation slowly collecting its strength for a struggle such as it had never entered into the mind of man to imagine. Yet my early theories about the war, while shaken, were by no means destroyed. I could not believe that the resources of the nations were equal to a prolonged struggle. I could not believe that the statements which were beginning to appear concerning Germany's deliberate plan of world domination had any real foundation in fact. A few mad militarists might cherish such a dream, but it could not represent the sober purpose of a whole nation. Of course I read Trietschke, and Bernhardhi, and Nietzche, and what Professor Cramb had to say about them, but I was still unconvinced. According to them the Napoleonic meglomania was alive and rampant again. But had not the world once and for all stamped out that kind of madness at St. Helena? And, besides, whatever powers the German Kaiser might possess, he was most certainly no Napoleon.

I state these errors of mine without apology because

they were typical. They belonged to the common mind of 1914. They certainly flourished both in England and America—particularly America. English opinion of the war, as I saw reflected in the newspapers of 1914, betrayed little vision of the real causes which produced it. German unscrupulousness, German frightfulness, German efficiency were recognised; but not the quality of German ambition. It was still less recognised in the States. In every large American city there were Germans, sober, industrious, rather slow-going men for the most part; how was it possible to associate them with wild dreams of world-empire? Men less qualified for world-empire could not be imagined. That men of this order should be conspirators working toward world dominion appeared incredible. If, in 1914, any one had ventured to declare that the American Republic was actually threatened by the growth of German power, he would have been derided as an insane "calamity-howler."

Yet there stood Charles Lorimer's portrait on the mantel, with a tiny Union Jack draped over it, and I could not look at it without some misgiving. It was a good honest face, like that of his sister Grace; the face of a quiet youth, who doubtless had been trained in the conventional virtues of his class. I gathered that he had been educated as an architect, and had enlisted in the Artist's corps when the war broke out, much to the grief and consternation of his mother. What was there in the nature of the war that had touched this sober-minded boy? I could understand Alan Joddrel. He had led an active out-of-door life,

and was a lover of adventure. But Charles Lorimer had always lived a conventional life; a large sum, not raised latterly without sacrifice, had been spent on his education; and he could not have helped knowing how difficult a start in life is for one in his position, how precarious his chances, how necessary are prudence and the thrifty use of opportunity. Yet he had sacrificed everything to be a soldier. On what motive? Certainly not from a spirit of romance or adventure—his plain honest face contradicted that theory. Yet some sudden heat of the soul had been his, some compelling vision—— Was it an unconscious prophetic sense that the very destiny of his country was at stake? Was it a conviction, which he could neither have formulated nor explained, that the very life of England was in peril, that all that the world held as most sacred and most precious was in the balance?

Whatever it was, the motive was not mine. Not mine this sudden heat of soul, this overmastering impulse—— It was vain to ask why. The wind blows where it listeth, and who can order its goings? One man it passes by, and in another man it finds a tiny spark that it can winnow into flame. All I could say was that the wind had not found me. I could find no better answer than the Master of all wisdom found, when he said that many are called but few chosen.

One night, as we sat round the fire, Mrs. Lorimer suddenly broke the reserve and began to talk about her son.

A letter had come from him that day, saying that

he expected to be somewhere in France by the end of the year. On the table in the hall was a pile of parcels meant for him—books, cigarettes, wool helmets and socks. Grace had returned from New York bringing with her the latest chapters of my book which she had type-written in the office. She handed me the manuscript after dinner with a bright smile and the remark that she thought the new chapters excellent. It was at this moment that Mrs. Lorimer put in her hand the letter from Charles that had come that morning.

"A letter from Charles," she cried; "why didn't you show it to me before?"

"Read it," said Mrs. Lorimer.

She turned pale, and her hand trembled as she opened the envelope.

I took up my manuscript and was about to leave the room when Mrs. Lorimer said, "Don't go. I should like you to hear it too. Grace, dear, won't you read it aloud?"

The letter was very brief, a boyish letter, full of high spirits. "I shall be jolly glad to go," it ended, "for I'm fed up with drill and marching. I long to be doing something. Of course I can't tell you when we go, but I know it will be before the New Year. Please remember always that I'm glad to go, and don't worry over me. All I'm afraid of is that the fighting will be over before I get there, and that's how we all feel."

A silence fell with the reading of the letter. Mrs. Lorimer sat with her handkerchief to her eyes. Grace stood dry-eyed gazing into the fire. Mary Lorimer

stood a little apart from us in the shadows, silent and sullen.

"O, I can't bear to think of it," said Grace.

Mrs. Lorimer lifted up a tear-stained face and said, "If I can bear it, you should, my dear."

"It's the waste that horrifies me," said Grace with a low voice.

"And do you think I don't realise that," her mother replied.

"Yes, I know you do, mother, but in some ways it's harder for me than it is for you. You've lived your life, and after all you've had a good deal of joy in it. Charles has had nothing but hard work and self-denial. He's just got to the point where success is within his grasp, and now he must throw it all away. And I always counted on living with him when he succeeded. He's counted on it too. Every day I've toiled in that hateful New York I've consoled myself with the thought that I did it for him, that some day I could go back to London and help him in his career. And now all he's done goes for nothing. He is to be wasted."

"My dear, you mustn't think like that——"

"But I do," interrupted Grace. "I'm not a pacifist. I know there must be wars. I know there must be armies. But aren't there plenty of men who are exactly fitted to be soldiers without taking boys like Charles? They're taking the best for the war, the gentlest, the most loveable, the best educated. I heard Mr. Herridge say to-day that if the war goes on much longer all the best men of every nation will be killed. There will be left only what he calls 'the runts.'

There'll be no art, and no music and no literature for a generation. All the fine minds will be extinguished, and it'll take a generation to grow others. That's what he said, and he's right. We're wasting all our best brains and blood. I know Charles isn't a genius, but he's a thousand times too good for cannon-fodder."

I was amazed at this sudden flash of passion in a person so gentle as Grace Lorimer. She had gone about her work in the office with such quiet industry, she appeared so cheerful and contented, that I had given her no credit for thoughts of her own. And I could not but realise that in expressing these thoughts she was not thinking only of her brother. She was consciously or unconsciously stating my case. She was offering an implied defence for me.

The horror of waste—was not that one of the keenest sensations which the war had brought to me? I had feared to waste my gift, to sacrifice my career—there was no doubt of that. It was true I had justification. I had believed the war would end in December. I had signed the contract which tied me for six months in that belief. But if I had felt as Charles Lorimer felt I should not have signed such an agreement. And I saw now that at the back of my thoughts lay this egoistic conviction that I was too good to be wasted in the indiscriminate massacre of war. Herridge had talked in that way, and, while I tepidly dissented, I had seen nothing ignoble in the idea.

Mary Lorimer suddenly spoke. She stepped out of the shadows, her dark brows drawn over her smoul-

dering eyes, her plain strong face illumined, and her hoarse contralto voice vibrant with contempt.

"You were always selfish, Grace," she said, "and you're selfish now. One for Charles, and two for yourself—that's what it comes to. You don't care a fig for Charles' honour, or the big motives which make him a hero—all you remember is you're losing something you wanted to have, something on which you'd set your heart——"

"It isn't that," cried Grace. "It's the wasting of his life."

"And what's that amount to?" interrupted Mary. "Doesn't it all come to this, that common men should die for their country—that's only right, because they're common. The farm-labourer and the artisan—let them die, they're of no account. There are thousands of them, thousands on thousands, and they can be easily replaced. But because a man is well educated and wears good clothes, he must be excused. He's too fine to be a patriot, except in words. Let the common men die for him; that's quite proper——"

"No, no, I never meant that."

"That's what it means, just the same. Because a man can play a piano better than anybody else, or write a poem, or even have a chance of being a decent architect, he must suffer no inconvenience by the war. His precious blood must not be spilt, not even a thimbleful of it. Christ didn't think Himself too good to go to the Cross, but a puppy in a Bond Street coat does."

"Mary, Mary, please don't be profane," pleaded Mrs. Lorimer.

"I'm not profane, mother. There's a poem somewhere that speaks of 'the Christs of the barricades.' That's what I mean. I'd rather be the commonest man in a trench or dying on a barricade than the most uncommon genius who goes on eating his three meals a day in comfort while other men are dying for him."

"You're glad that Charles is going to the trenches," sneered Grace.

"Yes, I am glad. He'll find the noblest company in the world there. Waste indeed! What right have we to complain of waste when the best men of England have gone, men a hundred times cleverer than Charles, men whose lives were of immense value to the nation, for they bore great names, and had the greatest gifts.—O, it makes me sick, this talk about waste! It's only cowards who make prudent calculations whether they ought to be wasted. Brave men don't think of themselves, or their own value. They just go."

Mrs. Lorimer rose from her chair. She was tall, like her daughters, and her black widow's dress gave her a pathetic stateliness.

"I will not permit you to quarrel," she said.

"I don't wish to quarrel," said Mary. "But I hate to think that while Charles is giving everything to the cause, we should grudge giving him. We should be proud to let him go."

"I know that," she answered. "I think I can say I feel it too. I did not feel it when he enlisted. I was just as bitterly resentful then as Grace is now, and for the same reason. But I've prayed over it. Many

nights when you girls were sleeping I've been praying. He's my only son. Much as you may love him, you can't love him as I do. I've thought a thousand times of those limbs I nursed when he was a baby torn and maimed on a battlefield. I've tortured myself with that vision till I thought I should go mad. But when his letter came this morning I became calm in mind, quite suddenly. I realised his heroism, and I saw the only thing for me was to try to be worthy of it. I can't say I'm glad that he should go—no, no, I can't say that. But I can say I'm content. I've given him up, and I think there's a kind of happiness growing up in me—— Don't spoil it, my dear girls. It's a difficult happiness; don't make it more difficult."

She took up a little soberly bound volume that lay upon the table.

"There's a verse here," she said, "which I came on by accident to-day. It helped me so much, I've been saying it over to myself all day,

> 'Born to be wasted, even so
> And doomed to feel and lift no voice,
> Yet not unblest, because I know
> So many other souls rejoice.'"

"Let me see it," cried Mary.

She took the little grey book, published anonymously, written by some one of whom nothing is known except that he suffered and drew strength from his sorrow.

"Ah," she said, "here's a better verse still,

'Waste, waste, each knoweth his own worth
And would be something, ere he sink
To silence, ere he mix with earth,
And part with love, and cease to think.'

It means, doesn't it, that every man wants to do something worthy before he dies, and that's what Charles is doing."

Grace lifted a tear-stained face, and silently knelt beside her mother's chair.

"Yes, I suppose that is true," she said slowly. "But O, it's hard. Mother, dear, forgive me if I've grieved you."

I stole out of the room, carrying with me a picture in my mind, pathetic, sublime, ineffaceable. I thought I should like to see that picture painted by one who understood it, with a dark cross-crowned hill for background, and three rays of light falling from a rift in the clouds on those three faces; Mrs. Lorimer, the Mother through whose heart the sword has passed, Mary the prophetess, Grace the penitent.

II

I couldn't sleep that night.

There are times when the deep silence of the country is a greater enemy to sleep than all the tumult of a city. The silence itself seems to vibrate with sound, like a gong softly struck by an indefatigable hand. A board creaks, a blind flutters, a twig upon the tree outside the window breaks, and each sound has the vio-

lence of an explosion. I rose and looked out of the open window. A large yellow moon was sinking behind the silent woods. Far away a clock struck midnight. It was as though the Night itself, dark-robed and ample-bosomed, called to me. A warm soft breeze was abroad. It came in gentle gusts, regularly timed, like breathing. I drew on a heavy frieze coat, and thought, since I could not sleep, I would go out and sit on the verandah.

I went downstairs on tiptoe. A small bead of light burned in the hall, and on the table lay the Christmas presents that were to find Charles Lorimer in the camp or in the trenches. The thought struck me that I had sent him nothing; I would do so to-morrow. For all I knew the same moon that hung like a lamp over these quiet woods might at this hour be lighting the sea on which he sailed to France. There was romance in the thought. Kipling's lines about putting out on the Long Trail rang through my memory, and for a moment I keenly wished myself with Charles. I saw the ship, packed with silent men, pushing through the silent waves, with black blunt-nosed destroyers leading and following, and I wondered how it would feel to leave behind the twice-breathed air of cities on a lone adventure. After all, was not Charles to be envied?

To my surprise, the door leading to the verandah was already unlatched. I opened it cautiously and stepped out. At first I saw nothing but the dark trees, with the moon caught in their upper branches, and the colourless space of lawn. Then, at the end of the verandah, I became conscious of a standing figure.

The figure turned at the sound of my footsteps, and I recognised Mary Lorimer.

She stood quite silent, her face ivory-pale in the moonlight, waiting for me to speak.

"I'm sorry if I disturb you—" I said lamely, "but I could not sleep."

"Nor I," she answered.

"May I sit down?"

"If you like. The house is as much yours as mine."

"Please don't be offended," I said.

"I'm not offended. On the contrary, I think I'm more amiable than usual. I've been here an hour and the silence has done me good."

There was much more cordiality in her voice than I had ever heard there. I had called it a hoarse contralto, but I recognised now a certain sweetness in the hoarseness—a powerful voice, if one may use the term, muffled in honey.

"But you came to be alone, no doubt," she said abruptly. "So I will go."

"Please don't," I said. "I would like to talk."

"About what?"

"I don't know."

"Then don't try. Why not be silent? I won't disturb you."

"Suppose you were to tell me what you have been thinking of while you've been out here alone, and I'll tell you the thoughts that made me sleepless," I said.

"Why should I? You wouldn't understand."

"I've more faith in your discernment than you in

mine then. I think if I told you my thoughts, you would understand."

"Why? You don't really know anything about me. For that matter no one in this house really knows me. Some persons are naturally solitary. Do you understand that?"

"Not some persons, but all persons, Mary. Our souls live alone."

"And you want me to expose my soul to you? Why should I?"

She laughed scornfully.

"What a boy you are," she added.

"And aren't you a girl?"

"O dear no," she replied. "It's a great many years since I was a girl. I'm quite old. I assure you that midnight and moonlight and proximity on a verandah with a nice boy don't stir me at all. But if it will please you to know what I was thinking of just before you came out so opportunely, I don't mind telling you. I was thinking of you."

"What were you thinking?"

"I was wondering how long you proposed to live in Oakwood."

She stretched out her hands suddenly to the waning moon, and added irrelevantly, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

"O yes you do," she said in a passionate whisper. "My brother is going to France, and you are here—isn't that enough? You heard what Grace said to-night about waste. Are you one of those who think

yourself too precious to be wasted? You didn't say a word. You've invited me to expose to you my soul. I'll be suitor now. Show me your soul. I'm very curious to see it."

"I can't, if you mean to put me on my defence," I said angrily.

"I don't wish to do that. Indeed I don't. But I think you must have something you would like to say. And since you yourself have asked confidence for confidence why not speak freely to me?"

Thus adjured I did what every young man does when a woman offers to be his confessor. I told her all about my position, my literary ambitions, my contract with Herridge, my expectation of the rapid end of the war, my disillusionment, my uneasiness of spirit, my desperate attempts to fix my mind upon my work, and the growing sense I had of the converging force of events that threatened my plans.

"It's like a sea that rises slowly round a man on a solitary rock," I concluded. "He holds on desperately, but he knows very well that every moment makes it more certain that he will be washed off."

"No wonder you couldn't sleep," she said in a low voice, when I had done. "And I couldn't sleep for just the same reasons."

"You?" I cried.

"Yes," she answered. "I'm clinging to a rock too—my domestic duties, and I know I'm going to be washed off."

And then she gave me a rapid sketch of her position. Mrs. Lorimer depended on her for everything.

It was she who conducted the affairs of the house, ordered the meals, kept the accounts. They were far from rich, and there was need for rigid economy. Mrs. Lorimer was really in frail health, and she had brooded much over the death of her husband, and latterly over the enlistment of her son. She had attained at last a difficult fortitude, but it was precarious; it was a question whether it could endure any further strain. Grace was necessary to the household. Her earnings made modest comfort possible.

"Yes," said Mary, "I was unjust to Grace when I called her selfish to-night. What I really meant was that she is self-centred. She isn't touched by the bigness of things outside her own life, her own affections. I'm different. Grace can't look over the wall of her own life; fortunately or unfortunately, I can. And what I see is this; that the hour has come when not only every man but every woman must share in this conflict. I must go. I don't know how or when—it's all dark to me; but I know I must go. And so now you know why I couldn't sleep to-night."

"But what could you do if you went? Aren't there things you could do without going? Things that would help?"

"Please don't remind me of woman's inefficiency," she said bitterly. "And please don't tell me I can knit socks for soldiers, and all that sort of thing. That's very well for old women who can do nothing else. I'm young and strong. And thank God, I'm plain. Mother won't be able to plead the moral danger of an unprotected loveliness when I tell her."

She stood very erect, gazing at the waning moon, her hands clasped behind her. The pale light, the deep shadows, the silence, lent a touch of grandeur to her attitude. Presently she said in a low voice, as though addressing some spiritual presences she saw in the shadows of the garden, "This is my chance. My one great chance. I will not let it be taken from me."

"Your chance?" I repeated.

"Yes, and yours too," she replied, moving toward me, and laying her cold hand on mine. Don't you understand? We've all been living little lives. Little, tame, colourless, quite uneventful lives—what they call exemplary lives—perfectly virtuous and dutiful. But O such tame virtues, such small duties! Doing the same things every day, and with no prospect but to go on doing the same things till we die—old men and old women who have never truly lived. Like pale soft-fleshed prisoners in the Bastille, with nothing better to do than kill time the best way we can by making toys. And now the walls have fallen down, and all the world's aflame! We can get out! We've discovered that there is a big thing to live for. Don't you want to get out? I do. It's my one great chance, as I said. I never thought it would come. I didn't see how it could. But it has come, and I find myself outside the walls of my Bastille. And I'm never going back, never. The women are all coming out everywhere. They've suddenly found a new world, where they can do bigger things than knit and sew. Aren't you coming out too?"

The hoarse sweet voice, with its deep contralto notes, thrilled me.

"I've told you my thoughts," she said. "You asked for them. What about your own?"

"I think they're like yours," I replied, "but they're not so definite."

"O no, that won't do," she retorted. "When a thought isn't definite it isn't sincere."

"Well then, here's the plain truth. I know very well I'm going to be washed off my rock, and I don't want to be."

"Is that all? Why, that's nothing. Of course no one wants to be washed off his rock. I don't *want* to leave mother. You don't *want* to leave the life you're living. But isn't that just the personal element —isn't there a bigger impersonal element at work? I'm not very pious, and judging you by your writings, I don't think you are. But there's one thing Christ said that has deeply impressed me, because it has in it the seed of all heroism. He said the cause for which He stood was so much greater than the most sacred personal affections, that the man who wasn't willing to sacrifice father and mother, and lands and houses for the cause wasn't worthy of Him."

"But this cause?"

"It's as big as the cause Christ died for. It's so big that no sacrifice we can make for it is too great. We mustn't be dragged to it. We must go, and go gladly, as Charles has done, as multitudes of others are going."

Her voice broke upon her brother's name.

"I've little right to advise you, and still less to reproach you," she continued. "Forgive me. But I've been watching you ever since you came to live with us. I know you haven't liked me—I could see that. After what I've said to-night perhaps you will like me less. But, believe me, why I've been interested in you is that I've been waiting to see you do the heroic thing."

"I'm afraid I'm a poor hero," I interposed.

"No, I won't have that. But, you aren't quite awake yet—that's all. You haven't heard the call."

In the distance the church clock struck one. The moon had sunk, and with the sinking a deeper silence fell, as if the last symbol of life itself had disappeared.

The call! It seemed to travel toward me out of that intense stillness. A whisper, a vibration, thin and clear: it came not as an imagined echo of distant battlefields, but in that last dying cadence of the striking hour, which proclaimed the birth of a new day. It came in a sudden freshness of the air, a sense of old things put away, of new occasions, of a kind of inarticulate dedication to these new demands and duties.

A window, closed above us, witnessed that some one in the sleeping house was wakeful. The spell was broken.

"We must go," said Mary.

And then, with a swift reversion to her natural tone of irony, she added, "What will Grace think if she has heard us whispering here!"

III

That night I had a vision.

I do not call it a dream, for in dreams there is usually some absurd or illogical element, as if Puck played tricks with the machinery of the brain. In the vision I had there was a clearness and sequence, which made it a revelation of reality.

I had the sense of emerging from a great depth as one does after diving. The darkness thinned round me into soft green light, and I found myself standing on the verandah of the ranch house at Fruitvale. All was as I had seen it so often—the lake sparkling in the breeze, the mountains ranged orderly around the ranch, the blue-jacketed Chinamen working in the shadows of the apple-trees, the flash of water in the runnel at the door. I heard the chug of a launch upon the lake, and began to watch eagerly the path that ran down the ranch to the wharf which was concealed beneath the hill. Some one was coming. I could hear voices and the sound of a drum.

Up the path came a small childish woman, clothed in black. Beside her ran a little boy, wearing a red cloth jacket, a peaked soldier's hat, and beating a toy drum. Behind them moved a man in khaki whom I recognised. It was Alan Joddrel. I knew that the woman was his wife, and the child his son.

The child ran forward to meet me, crying, "My father's a soldier. I'm going to be a soldier too, when I'm old enough, and kill Germans."

The woman came forward and smiled. I saw that

her dress was shabby, and that her face was pale and careworn. Her smile had no joy in it. It was a smile of the lips only, but the eyes were dark and brooding.

"He's always saying that," she said. "I wish he wouldn't, but I can't prevent him."

"You are Mrs. Joddrel?" I said.

"Yes, I often heard Alan speak of you, and once you promised to come and stay with us, but you didn't come, and so we never met."

I remembered the circumstance. I had gone up the Coast in a small steamer, intending to visit Alan; but I discovered that there would be no return boat for a week, and so gave up my plan.

"I am very glad to meet you now," I said.

Her lips quivered, and she said in a low voice, "Yes, I wanted to see you. I have been very lonely since Alan died."

"Alan dead!" I cried. "Why, Alan——"

I stopped, for not more than twenty yards away stood Alan. He was looking at me intently, and appeared to beckon me.

"Yes, he died a month ago," she continued. "He was with the Princess Pats. He was killed in action."

The child heard the words, and began to beat his drum again. He marched up and down crying, "I want to be a soldier and kill Germans. They killed my Papa."

I had a swift extraordinary impression that neither Mrs. Joddrel nor his child *saw* Alan. I could see him as distinctly às I ever saw him. He was quite unaltered except that his ruddy colour was diminished, and

he wore the short cropped moustache of the army officer. He stood just outside the fence that enclosed the little garden, leaning on it, as if tired.

The child caught sight of a butterfly, and ran down the hill, pursuing it. His mother went after him, and both slowly faded out of sight. They passed Alan without a glance.

I walked across the lawn, and stood beside the fence, face to face with Alan.

"Why, Alan," I exclaimed. "What's this? Your wife said you were dead."

"Yes, that's what they call it," he replied, "but I don't *feel* dead."

"She said you were killed in action. Is that true?"

"I suppose so. It was at Ypres. Something happened to me there. We went over the top and I was wounded. I was being carried out when a shell fell. I can remember nothing more. There was a tremendous noise, and then a great darkness, and then I was alone, and very happy."

"Happy?"

"Yes, but in a new kind of way. Did you ever, when you were a boy, run down a hill, jumping as you went, until you felt as though your feet were wings? Do you recall the feeling? Well, it was like that I felt. A sense of lightness and release—a sudden power of doing extraordinary things—of being free and strong— And I was so tired just before. I had tried to run in the mud and couldn't. It sucked me down, and I was plastered with it. And now I could run and leap— It was as though I could run along

the tops of the clouds. They were white: it was like running over snow when the surface is hard with frost and glittering."

"My poor Alan!" I exclaimed.

He shook his head and said. "No, no, you must not pity me. You see, I've found out a great thing, that there is no such thing as death. There's dying, but that's nothing. It's really passing. Like going through a mist, and coming out on the other side into sunshine. And you see, it's *you* that go through, all of you. And you mustn't think I'm sorry, and you mustn't be sorry for me. That's what I wanted to tell you. And I want you to keep my wife from being sorry. Tell her it's all right."

"I'm afraid I can't do that, Alan. To me it seems all wrong, O, so bitterly wrong."

"You mustn't think that," he said solemnly. "But I know why you think it—it's because you've not yet become a soldier. But one day you'll be one of us, and then you'll see things as we do."

A wonderful light filled his face as he spoke. "Yes, you'll be one of us, and before long I think. We, whom you call the dead, will come and fetch you. We want you so much to take our places. There's an old tag of Latin which I learned at school—it's about all I remember of Latin—it's Horace, isn't it—*Dulce et decorum*——

"Yes, that's it. Sweet and glorious it is to die for one's country—that's what it means, isn't it? Well, I've proved it. And that's why I'm happy."

All at once a sound of music filled the air, as of

a hidden choir in some great cathedral. It was a gust of melody, blown from a great distance, in which I could distinguish the words *est pro patria mori*—sung by fresh young voices.

Alan stood, with his face uplifted to the hills, as if he heard it too.

"Farewell!" he whispered.

He turned his back on me, and I saw upon his tunic a great rent, and a deep red stain.

I woke, with the sun pouring into the room, and heard the bell calling men to matins in the little church hidden in the woods.

CHAPTER IV

ALICE CROXON

I

On Christmas day I received two letters.

One was from Vernon. After giving me the local gossip he said, "You remember what I told you about Alice, that day when we talked together on the way to the Lost Lode Mine? Well, it seems her father's affairs have taken a sudden turn, and he is quite rich again. I think it's steel or leather he's making money in, he's a great speculator, you know, and the war has given him a great opportunity. At all events he's on his feet again, and richer than ever by what I can make out. He's living at the Waldorf in fine style, and he has written to Alice, telling her to come back to New York at once. Of course she doesn't know the real truth about his previous troubles, and I've never given her a hint of them; so she takes it as a natural thing that her father wants her back in New York, and promises her all kinds of gaiety. Personally, I'm sorry. Alice has fitted herself into our simple modes of life in a wonderful way, and is, I am sure, much happier here than she ever was before. She's lost her discontent; she's become natural, if you understand what I mean. And we've grown

very fond of her, and shall feel parting with her very much. However, she's going back to New York, and no doubt you will see her. You won't be offended, I'm sure, if I wish you luck with her."

The other was a brief note from Alice—the first I had ever had from her.

"Dear Gareth," she wrote. "It is I who should be called Gareth, for I've stuck to the business of dish-washing a good deal longer than you. However, the episode is closed for me too. I've put away my home-spun and am contemplating the delights of being clothed in purple and fine linen. What a comfort it will be to wear silk stockings again, and not be ashamed of one's feet! Whether I shall ever be happier than I've been here I don't know; but I'm sure I shall dearly love riding in a limousine. I've no doubt you were equally glad to return to civilisation again, though I don't suppose you will admit it. That'll be something to quarrel about when we meet, won't it? And that reminds me of what I most want to say, but almost forgot, that I do really expect to be in New York early in the New Year, at the Waldorf. We might arrange for our amicable quarrel some day, if you still are at all interested in your obedient Lynette."

I read this letter with an amused sense of its charming casuistry. It was the typical casuistry of woman, who arrives at her end by indirection. What she meant was obvious enough; she wished to see me.

But she could not bring herself to say so in plain words, and so she played with the idea of Gareth and Lynette, leaving me to draw my own conclusions.

These conclusions were not altogether happy. So far as Alice's letter was concerned, I was happy enough; but there was Vernon's letter to consider. I did not at all like the idea of Theodore Croxon as a rehabilitated millionaire. I liked still less the idea of Alice as a millionaire's daughter. I had seen her as a natural creature, fresh and vivid with sincerest life; and didn't like to think of her wearing silk stockings and riding in a limousine. Our charming idyll of Gareth and Lynette was exactly suited to a camp in the mountains, but I couldn't conceive it being played out with the Waldorf for a stage. I became suddenly conscious of a resentment against wealth, especially wealth gained in Theodore Croxon's way. Why couldn't fate have left Alice poor? She had been happy among poor folk like the Vernons—it was very doubtful if she would be happy, or certainly as happy, in the glitter of New York. That Power, whom the ancients pictured as the Supreme Ironist, had stuck a clumsy finger into my affairs, and had played me a a scurvy trick.

For, of course, my ultimate thought, which I didn't care to examine, was that this new wealth put a barrier between myself and Alice. We had met in Eden; when we met again it would be in Babel. Our idyll that seemed quite natural in Nature's garden would have quite another aspect among the lofty towers of Babel. Love spoke with a true accent in Eden; would

it be intelligible in Babel? But there I stopped, with a hearty wish that Theodore Croxon had remained smashed, or, better still, that he had never existed. Parents are great inconveniences. They are worse than inconveniences. They are positive nuisances when they interfere with love's purple dream, and build barriers of gold round desirable and lovely daughters. What a pity it is that women don't grow like flowers, with no troublesome obligations of ancestry to assert rights in them!

The first letter one receives from a woman he loves, or thinks he loves, is an event. I found myself going over every phrase of Alice's letter, again and again, trying to find meanings in it which lay beneath the surface. Was she merely ironical in her anticipation of luxury? Was she equally ironical in her assumption of the name Lynette? I suppose every man examines such a letter in a spirit of wonder and unfruitful search. He weighs each word which, in all probability, the writer never weighed at all. He tries even to find an indication of character in the hand-writing. Alice's hand-writing was, if I may use the term, unsentimental. It was large, free, firm, and spread itself spaciously over the page. It didn't suggest romance, as the fine sloped writing of our mothers does. There was nothing tender, evasive, provocative about it; just plain daylight writing, a look-the-world-in-the-eyes sort of writing. There was only one thing about the letter that gave it the faintest aroma of a love-letter; that was the resumption of

our Gareth and Lynette fiction, which was an invocation to happy memories.

Nevertheless it stirred me deeply, and I became aware how much I had thought of Alice since the day I parted from her at Fruitvale. She had been in all my thoughts as a light, a music, a hope, a goal of effort. I had never even thought of comparing her with other women. She stood apart from them. Not that she was greater or better; in Mary Lorimer, for example, I could recognise a gravity and heroic strength of nature, very unusual in women. I asked, as many men have asked before me, what was the special quality that makes one woman, not conspicuously better or fairer than other women, the sole mistress of one's heart, the only woman at whose touch the heart melts? And I could find no better answer to the riddle than they. It's not something to be rationalised; it's magic, it's charm, it's evasive as a perfume, it's not a quality at all, but a delicate essence of personality, unperceived by others, not meant for others, recognisable only by the lover. In those long happy days at Fruitvale I had recognised this peculiar appeal of Alice's personality. Not continuously indeed, not very clearly——. It had often evaded me. It had the volatility of a perfume—it came in sudden wafts, in swift penetrating gusts of sweetness. But I had felt it, and though in colder hours of reflection I had accused myself of folly in yielding to it, yet I knew that I could never forget it.

As I read her letter all these indistinct undefined sensations took a sharper edge. It was borne in upon

me that there did exist between us a secret compact, which lay beyond the reach of outward circumstance. It was the compact of interlocking sympathies, a thing too sensitive and delicate for words, very liable to rupture, yet holding the promise of development, of response, of the final assuagement of desire.

II

Under the charm of this brief note, and the anticipations which it kindled, my life took a new aspect. It was suffused with a rosy light. My work went forward at a great rate, and even Herridge expressed himself as satisfied with its quality. I became gay and cheerful, and tried to impart some of my cheerfulness to the sombre Lorimer household. Since the night of our conversation on the verandah Mary Lorimer had avoided me. She hung upon the skirts of my life, a menacing prophetess, but she did not interfere with me. I believe she attributed my cheerfulness to the determination on my part to enlist, and she had the kind of pride in me which the apostle has in a new-found convert. But it was pride mixed with fear—the fear of my backsliding, and she watched me like a visible conscience.

Of course I couldn't tell her the reason of my new cheerfulness. Nor could I tell her that the whole subject of the war had become insignificant to me. I didn't know it myself. I still followed its tragic drama with an interest which I thought sincere. Yes;

that is the exact phrase—it had become a drama, and I a spectator sitting in the stalls. It is curious how with the best of us collective drama is liable to complete displacement by personal drama. In the hour when a man loses some one whom he has greatly loved, all the collective struggle of men is of no importance; and it is the same when a man finds himself miraculously possessed of love. His whole world narrows itself into a single intense emotion. My whole world had become Alice Croxon, and there was no room in my mind for any thoughts that were not related to her.

It was a wonderful thing to love—a yet more wonderful thing to imagine oneself loved. Even Mary Lorimer was woman enough to know that, I thought. I found myself thinking of her with profound pity. She was capable of love, capable of an intense passion; I knew enough of the depth of her nature to be sure of that. And these depths would never be reached by love; all the chances were against her; and her very strength would resist the divine weakness of love. In this, as it turned out, I did not know her. But I thought I did, and with the serene egoism of the lover pitied her for her supposed incapacity to share emotions which I imagined peculiar to myself.

In the meantime, I began to be acutely anxious to know what sort of a person Theodore Croxon was.

I asked Herridge one day whether he had ever heard of him.

"Croxon," he said. "Who is he? Does he write?"

"No, I believe he's a millionaire."

"Don't know any millionaires," he said curtly. "Not in my line. But I can find out for you, if you like."

He rang his bell, and a little wizened bald-headed man named Rogers appeared.

"Rogers is my encyclopædia of unusual and generally useless facts," Herridge said grimly. "He's got a mania for information, knows all the baseball records for a decade, and all the prize-fighters and their rating for a generation. Rogers, this gentleman wants some information about a man called Theodore Croxon. Wants to put him in a book, I suppose. Ever heard the name?"

"Is he a light-weight or a heavy?"

"No, he's only a millionaire. Ever heard of him?"

"I can't say I have, but I can find out in ten minutes, Mr. Herridge."

"All right. Go and look in those extensive newspaper filings of yours. If the man's any one at all, I daresay he's there."

The old man ambled off, polishing his bald head with a red silk handkerchief as he went.

"That's a queer fellow," said Herridge. "I took him over with the office when I came, and I've never had the heart to get rid of him. He's spent his entire life in cutting extracts from the newspapers and magazines, and filing them on some elaborate system of his own. He says he's going to leave his collection to the nation. I believe it runs into hundreds of volumes. There's a tradition in the office that he began life as a brilliant writer, but a tragedy happened

to him which upset his reason. Didn't make him a lunatic, you know; just jarred his mind enough to push it off the rails. He'd married a beautiful girl, who was burned to death upon her wedding night. A filmy sort of wedding-dress and a lighted match dropped on it, I believe. That must be forty years ago, judging by his age. So we're pretty tender with the old fellow, and keep him on the pay-roll, and cheer him up now and then by letting him think his books of filings are indispensable to us."

The old man came back with a thick brown book of newspaper filings in his hands.

"I think I've found the gentleman," he said proudly. "I've a perfect system of filing, first by name letters, then by dates, and then by characteristics——"

"Yes, we know that, Rogers," said Herridge, not unkindly. "We all admire your system; it's truly wonderful. But please give us your results."

"Well, there isn't a great deal to tell," said Rogers. "For he doesn't seem to be what I may call a public character. I find his name first in 1911 in relation to some land companies in Florida. It was alleged that he sold people farms that were lakes. There was talk of a prosecution, but it was dropped. His name comes up again in 1913 in relation to the cotton market. It was reported that he had speculated wildly and got caught. That's all I've got on my files, but I ventured to 'phone a financial friend of mine, and he says there's a Theodore Croxon who has been busy in the steel market, and is getting, or is reported to have got, large orders for army shoes from

France. Rather a slippery kind of gentleman, if I may say so, sir."

"Thank you, Rogers. You're really invaluable, and we're very much obliged to you."

The old man acknowledged the compliment with a little jerky bow.

"Any time you want me, you'll always find me ready," he said as he shuffled off.

This information was distinctly disconcerting, though it was pretty much what I expected. I felt a sort of meanness in getting it—it was rather like employing a private detective to investigate Alice's father. But my question to Herridge had been quite casual, and I had never suspected the existence of the omniscient Rogers. As for his information, I had no doubt it was correct. The date of 1913, when Croxon had been caught on the cotton market, coincided with what Vernon had told me of the rapid decline of his fortunes.

I pictured him to myself as a lean wolfish man, bright and alert, bold and unscrupulous, the typical bandit of finance. In this I was quite wrong, as I discovered a day later when I saw him in the Waldorf. I had called to ascertain if Alice had arrived and was standing by the desk when I heard a voice behind me say, "O Misther Croxon, I'd like a word with you." I looked round and saw that the speaker was an undersized bearded man of unmistakably Jewish blood. He had laid a long lean hand upon the arm of a big man who towered over him by a good foot and a half, whom I knew to be Croxon. He

had very broad shoulders, a solid close-cropped head, and a face that would have been heavy and lifeless but for a pair of remarkably bright and shrewd grey-blue eyes. The first impression, created chiefly by his great bulk and prize-fighter's head, was that he was a very formidable person, whose path it would be unsafe to cross. The impression, however, was corrected by the mouth, which was distinctly humorous, and a kind of dancing madness in the eyes. They were shrewd and clear, as I have said, but they had a curious visionary quality, a glint as of sun-bright ice,—the eyes of a man accustomed to gaze into blue distances. I had remarked the same look in the eyes of men who lived on the prairie, and I had also remarked its total absence in city-dwellers.

I didn't hear what his Hebrew friend said to him, for he spoke with his hand to his mouth in a hoarse whisper. Croxon appeared to be listening to him with good-natured but contemptuous tolerance. Presently he replied in a booming voice, which, nevertheless, had a big-toned suavity, "Nothing doing, Isaacs." He turned on his heel without another word, and came to the desk for his key.

At this point the clerk, with a mistaken notion of doing me a service, said, "This gentleman has been enquiring for you, Mr. Croxon." Croxon's face instantly became hard and suspicious. He gazed at me with a cold curiosity, appraising my appearance, and probing my possible motives for asking for him. Apparently the survey was not unsatisfactory, for his mouth relaxed in a smile, and he said in a voice as

soft as butter, "I am pleased to meet you, sir. Is it on business you wish to see me?"

"I'm afraid not, Mr. Croxon," I replied. "The only claim I have to your acquaintance is that I have the pleasure of knowing your daughter."

"My daughter," he cried with such a note of enthusiastic pleasure that I knew instantaneously and instinctively that his whole heart was bound up in Alice.

"I met her in Fruitvale last summer, when she was staying with my friends, the Vernons."

He stretched out a huge hand, and held mine with a grip that hurt.

"Come right up to my rooms," he said. "You and I should have a good deal to talk about, for it's months since I saw my daughter."

I went up to his rooms, and he at once began to ask me all about Alice. He listened with absorbed attention while I spoke of the life at Fruitvale.

"Poor little girl," he said. "It was too bad to send her away. But I had to. And you think she was really happy with the Vernons, do you?"

"I know she was. She loved the life."

"What did she do? Tell me."

On this invitation I drew a quite idyllic picture of life at Fruitvale, and was touched and a good deal surprised to see tears in his eyes.

"You can't think how lonely I've been without her," he said simply.

And then, with that unsophisticated frankness which is so amiable a trait in the American, he be-

gan to tell me details about his personal history, which are not usually revealed except between intimates. He had lost his wife years before, and had not remarried. She had died while he was away on one of his land-hunting trips. The news came to him in a solitary hut beside the Peace River. "It put the sun out for me," he said. "I didn't think it would ever shine again; but it did when my little girl began to grow up."

We were interrupted by the barking of a dog. He rose, and went into the bath-room, returning with a small wicker-basket, out of which sprang a tiny King Charles spaniel.

"She was very fond of dogs," he said gravely. "I used, after she died, to carry her little dog round with me on all my travels. This little creature is in the direct descent of that little dog my wife loved—a kind of great grandchild, aren't you, Flossy? I never go anywhere without her—sort of keeps me straight to have her with me. We've had hard times together, and we've had good times, but we've never separated."

He spoke with a wonderful softness and wistfulness. I thought of Rogers, and the damaging information recorded in his files, and of the present dubious business of the man, and I did not know how to reconcile these things with this elementary tenderness of nature.

"You must go now," he said, with a sudden hardening in his voice. "I've a business engagement for to-night, which I must keep. But come again—let us say the day after to-morrow—and have some dinner

with me. I expect Alice will be here, and no doubt she'll be glad to see you."

He looked at me with a keen appraising glance.

"You aren't interested in stocks, are you?"

"No, I'm a writer, a novelist."

"That's good," he said heartily. "Forgive my asking, but you've no idea how I'm bothered by men who want me to give them tips, and the tricks they play on me. You saw me talking to our Hebrew brother downstairs, didn't you? He's one of them. He positively haunts me. I wouldn't wonder if he's listening at the key-hole or trying to hear through the transom now."

"These are the penalties of being a millionaire, I suppose," I said with a laugh.

"Plenty of penalties and very few pleasures," he said grimly. "And the further you go the more penalties and the fewer pleasures."

I think he was going to become confidential again, but just then the 'phone rang, and I caught snatches of a conversation in which dollars were eagerly discussed. He waved his hand to me, and I knew myself dismissed. When I entered the foyer the "Hebrew brother" was still prowling up and down like an unquiet ghost. He bowed to me obsequiously, and would, I think, have spoken to me, if I had given him the opportunity. I perceived that I had gained great prestige in his eyes by having been closeted with Croxon for an hour, and the respectful glances of the desk-clerk conveyed the same impression. If they had expressed their thoughts, I have no doubt they

would have credited me with an astute financial intelligence of which I was totally incapable; and if I had expressed mine they would have been surprised to learn that I was not thinking of Theodore Croxon as a millionaire at all, but as the father of Alice.

III

Two days later I met Alice.

"She only arrived this morning," said her father, as we stood waiting for her. "Certainly Fruitvale has done a great deal for her. I never saw her looking so well."

The door opened and there appeared an Alice I had never seen. I had seen only the Alice of homespun: this new Alice was beautifully gowned, her dark hair fashionably dressed, a string of pearls round her slender throat. She moved across the room in the confidence of her young beauty, with an innocent haughtiness of carriage, knowing herself worthy of admiration; a woman to be remarked among a throng, proud and sweet and desirable.

"So Gareth has come at last," she said with a smile. "And Lynette is very glad to see him, for she's had no one to play with her since he went."

"Gareth?" repeated her father. "What's that mean?"

"Only that we once shared a camp together, father, and learned how to build fires and wash dishes."

He looked mystified and curious.

"That was a long time ago," she remarked—and added enigmatically, "At least it seems so."

We went down to dinner in the crowded dining-room. A table had been reserved against a window, from which we could watch the throngs upon the pavement, and the lights of automobiles flashing up and down, like fire-flies in the evening gloom.

"New York at last," she said with a happy sigh. "I didn't know I loved it so much when I was away from it."

"It's the only place worth living in," said Croxon pontifically.

"O no," she said, "not quite that. I love the mountains too, and so do you, father."

"Yes, of course," he made ready assent. I think he would have assented to anything she said, in his gladness at having her with him again.

"And please, I am so hungry," she said with that innocent childish greediness which I had found so amusing at Fruitvale. "You can't think how good New York food looks to me after being without it so long."

"O yes, I can," said Croxon. "I've lived on bacon and flap-jacks for weeks together in the woods. I hope the Vernons gave you something better than that to eat."

"The Vernons are perfectly fine, father. They gave me the very best they had."

"Of course they did," said Croxon. "Any one would. I must do something for the Vernons. You shall tell me what to do."

"I'll tell you the best thing to do, father. Send half-a-dozen new dresses to Mrs. Vernon. Poor thing, she hasn't seen such a thing for years. Let me choose them, will you?"

She turned to me and said, "It's a perfectly lovely thing to have a rich father, isn't it? See what he's given me this afternoon." She pointed to the necklace of pearls. "Isn't it beautiful? And didn't he understand me?"

"What did he understand?"

"Something that many wise men have not known, and therefore have been dreadfully punished," she said with a gay laugh. "The solemn truth, my unsophisticated Gareth, that the woman never lived who couldn't be made happy with jewels and new dresses."

"I thought you'd forgotten all these vanities at Fruitvale."

"About as much as you forget your authorship, which is also a pleasant form of vanity, isn't it?" she retorted with a little gleam of humorous malice.

Croxon listened to our talk with a surprised air, but with evident enjoyment. I suppose he hadn't formed a just idea of our relations; he hadn't suspected their intimacy. But he was not displeased; I noted that. He hung upon his daughter's words, with a pathetic eagerness. He nodded his head gravely, his lips smiled, and in his keen eyes I read the comment, "Isn't she clever?" Of course I was only the foil to that cleverness. If he had spoken his thought I am sure he would have said, "You may consider yourself a very fortunate young man to furnish

the provocation for my daughter's brilliancy," and certainly I would not have disputed the justness of his estimate.

The dinner passed off delightfully. Our talk was mostly about Fruitvale, its men and women, its scenery, its charm of climate and situation, with much intimate gossip about the doings of the little settlement.

"If the place is all you say it is, I must build a house there," said Croxon.

"O no, that wouldn't do at all, father. You'd want to build an Adirondack cottage, which means

> 'A cottage, with a double coach-house,
> The pride that apes humility.'

And that would corrupt the settlement by making every one else envious and discontented."

"Well, we'll build a genuine cottage then, and spend next summer there. How's that?"

"That wouldn't do for me, I'm afraid, father. I want you to take me to Paris. You know, I was to have gone last October, and didn't go on account of this wretched war."

"And you can't go now, Alice. Paris isn't any longer the Paris you love. It's dead."

"But you are going there soon. You told me you were, father."

"That's a different matter. I have to go on business sometime toward the beginning of May."

"Well, the war will be all over by that time. Every-

body says so. And we'll get there in time to see the peace celebrations. That'll be delightful."

He smiled tolerantly, and said, "Well, we'll see." But the look in his eyes contradicted the smile on his lips. I remembered what Rogers had reported about his contracts for boots for the French army, and his activity in the steel market. I had forgotten it. I had been conscious only of his pride and his affection, the tenderness and human quality of the man. The cold ice-blue glitter in his eyes reminded me of Croxon the speculator, who had a direct interest in prolonging the war.

An inconsiderate impulse moved me to question him about it, to ask his opinion on the chances of an early peace.

"Buy steel," was his curt reply.

"But I don't want to buy steel, Mr. Croxon. I haven't the least idea of making money out of this war."

It was an unfortunate remark, for it amounted to an accusation.

"Why not?" he answered. "Some one has to make money out of every war. It can't be helped. War's a vast business, and there are profits in it for the man who knows how to make them."

"America's making them. I know that. She's making them because she's protected by the British Navy. It doesn't strike me as a very worthy occupation."

"And we're feeding Britain, and supplying her with ammunition—don't forget that. She ought to be very much obliged to us."

"And getting rich in the process," I retorted.

"And where's the harm in that? I never met a man yet who wouldn't be rich if he knew how. If a man is poor, you may be sure it isn't because he loves poverty. I've been poor, and I know. And I've known lots of men who professed it was a very perilous thing to be rich, but the moment I offered them the chance of making money they experienced a sudden change of heart, and were perfectly ready to take the risk. And I'll tell you another thing; I know some vociferous pacifists who are putting all their dollars into munitions. They love peace, but they're not above making a profit out of war, if they can. It's very like your clergymen in England of whom I've read, who denounce the drink traffic from their pulpits and invest their savings in brewery shares. Human nature's a queer compound, I admit; but there's one thing about it you may be absolutely sure of—at the bottom of every man's motives you'll find the dollars, sir."

He had talked himself into a good humour, and he made me conscious that ill-humour on my part was a gross social error, since I was his guest.

Alice appeared to be delighted with the controversy.

"I do love to hear men quarrel," she said, "and it's so long since I heard a really ferocious argument. The men at Fruitvale don't quarrel—they're too tame. They're incapable of agitation."

"I'm sure I wasn't quarrelling," I protested.

"O yes, you were. You were pushing your fingers through your hair—that's a sure sign. I've seen you

do it before. And father's face is quite red. Don't deny it, either of you. You've only to look in the glass, and you'll see that I'm right."

"I suppose you agree with your father?" I said ungraciously.

"Of course I do. I always told you I was a very worldly person, didn't I, though you would never believe it. And besides, when your father's just given you a pearl necklace costing goodness knows how much, you couldn't expect me to disagree with his ideas of earning money, could you?"

We rose from the table and went out into the crowded foyer. As usual, there were men waiting for Croxon, and one touched his elbow, and drew him aside in a whispered conversation. Alice laid her hand upon my arm.

"I had to keep you from quarrelling with father, hadn't I, Gareth? If I hadn't, and he'd become really angry, he'd have ordered you off, and then I shouldn't have seen you again, should I?"

"You are really glad to see me, then?"

"Of course I am. There's so much I want to talk about. I'm really in great trouble."

"Trouble, Alice? What about?"

"Things in general. The war chiefly. It's breaking up everything. Vernon is going to leave his wife and enlist. And I didn't tell you, did I—poor Alan Joddrel's dead."

"Then my dream was true!" I cried.

"What dream?"

"I dreamed a month ago that he came to me with a great red wound in his back."

"That was about the time he died," she said. She gazed at me with eyes distended, and a pale face. Under the glittering lights of the crowded foyer, the shadow of death passed, like a waft of cold air.

"Let us sit down," she said. "I'm afraid I don't understand. What do you mean by saying you dreamed Alan Joddrel was killed?"

We found a quiet corner, and I told her my singular vision of Mrs. Joddrel and her boy coming up the ranch-path, and Alan following them like a wraith.

"That's more than curious," she said, "for, do you know, something like that did really happen. Mrs. Joddrel and her little boy did come to Fruitvale. She expected to find you there, for she did not know you had returned to New York. At the store they directed her to come to the Vernons. And she was exactly as you describe her, a little woman in shabby black, and her boy had a soldier's hat and a red jacket. Gareth, what's the matter with the world? What's happening? There's something uncanny about it. I'm frightened."

"Why should you be frightened, Alice?"

"I don't know, but I am. It began that night when we saw the Northern lights at the old mine. Do you remember what the old lame man said, that they were an omen of something big and dreadful? It's like living in a house where everything seems solid, but it isn't. It's as though the walls kept getting

thinner, till they were transparent—you haven't any shelter—it's like God breaking through."

"Why, Alice——" I protested.

"No, let me speak, please. I can't tell father what I feel, for he wouldn't understand. And I couldn't tell the Vernons, for the same reason. But you will understand. I'm gay, and bright, and cheerful, and I'm truly worldly—I always told you that. But I've a feeling very often that nothing I touch is real. Something's happening to the world that isn't rational; it isn't human and comprehensible. It's like a great ship that's turned turtle; all the big familiar rooms are filled with black water, and we're just scrambling up the keel, and clinging there. The world's gone topsy-turvy. God's hand has pushed it over. I thrust the thought away from me, but it always comes back. I can't see what God wants to do it for. We were all so happy, and now——. There's Vernon going to enlist, and poor little Mrs. Vernon pretends she's proud of him. But I've heard her crying in the night. And there's that poor little Mrs. Joddrel—she looked like a child stupefied by unkindness. And one night, after you left, we saw those lights again—they came walking over the hills like white ghosts, whispering together, and planning mischief. O, there's no doubt of it, I'm frightened!"

It was a strange confession to be made in that brilliant foyer, thronged with men full of meat and women glittering with diamonds. My eyes turned instinctively to the vision of a world, palpable and real,

where no one had the least sense of God breaking through, as Alice had put it.

She read my thought, and said, "I know everything looks real. And to-morrow, no doubt, I shall believe it's real. I'm going to have a good time in New York, never fear. I'm going to let my worldliness have full fling, and perhaps I shall end by being just what these women are."

"You couldn't," I said.

"Why not? They're what they are because they have wealth. Father tells me he's got more money than he ever had, and so you see my fate's fixed."

There was a bitterness in her voice, a cruel jarring note of irony.

"Well, that's enough," she said, with a swift return to her usual lightness of speech. "I've rid myself of the perilous stuff, and already I feel much better. After all, I don't suppose God troubles Himself very much over any of us—there are too many of us. I think I've lived too long among the mountains. They can be very grim by the end of November, I assure you, and they've depressed me. Forget my silly confidences, Gareth, and help me to have a good time. If you don't, I'll never forgive you."

We saw Croxon making his way toward us through the gay throng.

"Well," he said, "what have you two been talking about?"

"A little of the pleasures of memory, and a good deal more of the pleasures of anticipation," said Alice.

"Father, we want you to take us to the Opera to-morrow night. It's *Aïda,* and I'd love to hear it again."

"Why certainly," he replied; "I believe I'm a subscriber; but I haven't cared to go alone. I've waited for my little girl to go with me. And I'm sure I shall be delighted for Mr. Waller to come with us."

"To-morrow night, then," said Alice. "And now, if you'll excuse me, I'll go to bed. I had almost forgotten that I've had five nights in the train, the last on the bumpiest railway in the world, and I'm really tired."

IV

We went to the Opera, and the next night to a play; and after that to many plays. Croxon appeared satisfied to leave Alice in my care, and to be rather glad than otherwise that he could count on me as an escort for her. He was obviously too busy for such a duty. He was always driving about New York, from office to office, coming home at night indisposed for pleasure, and often spending long hours in his rooms over plans and papers, or in interviewing persons of importance to him in his schemes. We would come back from the theatre to find him elbow deep in legal agreements, writing furiously, or looking up with tired eyes to greet us. It didn't seem much fun to be a millionaire. He worked harder than a dozen clerks, was overdriven and weary, and had no time for pleasure. But there was no doubt that he found a kind of fierce enjoyment in his task, in its antagonisms and

its conquests, perhaps in its very chances and perils.

He left me uncertain of what he thought of me. In his brusque way he liked me; at all events he was never unfriendly. I was free to come and go as I willed; he took me for granted. Alice found me serviceable, and that was enough for him. It was evident that he had perfect faith in the discretion of his daughter, and was glad to allow her the most complete liberty of action. He had, I suppose, a kind of faith in me too, that I was not likely to abuse the privileges accorded me. He must have suspected that I was in love with Alice, but he gave me no sign of whether he regarded such a temper on my part with favour or disfavour.

It seemed that Alice had no woman friends in New York. She and her father had lived almost entirely in hotels. Their only real home was left when Mrs. Croxon died, many years before; it was a plain clapboarded house in a Western town. Croxon showed me a faded photograph of it once, with Alice, a little girl in short frocks, standing on the wooden steps. When her mother died, she had been sent to friends in Chicago, and then to a private school upon the Hudson. Croxon, who at the time was engaged in the lumber-business, had resumed his wandering life as prospector and speculator, travelling far and wide to examine mining properties or acquire sections of forest-land. He would appear at long intervals at the school, take his daughter out for a day's pleasure, and disappear again in meteoric fashion. And because the girl had no home to which she might invite her

school-mates, she made few friends and left the school as solitary as she had entered it.

It was a comfortless, unhomely life, which produced independence of character, but little else that was worth having. When Croxon made his first fortune by speculation, he realised that he had not been quite just to Alice, and he sought to make her amends by purchasing a house and establishing himself in New York. It was to this house that Mrs. Vernon came as governess, and she was the first woman with whom Alice had ever known a contact that was intimate and affectionate. But even as a householder, Croxon made no friends who were congenial to a young girl. Men came to the house constantly, and in numbers; eager nervous men with predatory eyes, fixed on the illusion of wealth; indifferent to the finer apparition of youth that glided sometimes through the sumptuous rooms, silent and a little scornful. When the crash came the house was sold, and father and daughter went to a second-rate hotel within a hundred yards of the inaccessible splendours of the Waldorf. Croxon had sense enough to perceive that this was no place for Alice, and had the wisdom to send her off to the Vernons at Fruitvale. Since then he had known various vicissitudes, from which he had at last emerged triumphant; but by this time he was inured to hotel life, and had lost the desire for anything else. If he had told the truth, he would have said he greatly preferred the thronged halls and passages of the Waldorf, the sense of stir and variety, the evasion of household responsibilities, the entire

liberty of his life, to anything he might have attained by living in a house of dressed stone in the pompous solitude of Upper Fifth Avenue.

I learned these facts incidentally. Sometimes Alice opened a shuttered window, and gave me a brief glimpse of her past.

"I don't like women," she said once. "They're all right with men, but they can be mighty mean to one another." When I expressed surprise, she said, "You've never lived in a girl's boarding school. I have, and believe me there's no place on earth where there's more petty cruelty. You men only see the dear creatures in white dresses, moving across the campus like vestal virgins going to a shrine, and you think how tender and sweet and gracious they look. You should hear them talk in their bedrooms. And you should see how they behave to a girl they don't understand, or whose social position is enigmatic."

"Were you unhappy at school, Alice?"

"Of course I was. I didn't have friends to visit me like the others, and that set their tongues wagging. I knew they invented all sorts of legends about me, none of them to my credit. And when father did come to see me, they sniggered, as though they didn't believe he was really my father.

"I did make one friend, or thought I did; she was the girl I expected to go to Paris with. I never knew why she ceased writing to me all at once, but I know now. She had no doubt heard something about father's business troubles, which he concealed from me, and of course she dropped me."

"If that was the kind of girl she was, she couldn't have been any great loss."

"O yes, she was. She was the only friend I'd ever had. I wasted what poets call 'the treasures of my heart' upon her. Really and truly I did admire her, with that romantic love a young girl has for another girl just a little older and wiser than herself. I can remember lying awake at night and inventing all kinds of dramas about the things I would do for her, how if she were drowning I would save her and die in doing it, and all that sort of thing. I would have done it, too. I would have jumped at the chance of being sacrificed for her. Wasn't I a little fool?"

"I can remember something of the kind myself," I said. "Boys have the same kind of attachments. I once had a friend I'd have walked all over London to meet for a single hour, and he came and stayed in a house in the next street from mine and never came to see me."

"That's not the same thing, Gareth. Men know how to live with themselves. Women rarely do. Look at my father. I know he loves me dearly, but he can get on quite well without me. I'm not really necessary to him. Nine-tenths of his thoughts are in his business. Now and again he gives the other tenth a chance, and then he's the most delightful father on earth. Do you know what I've thought of doing? I've thought of learning type-writing, so that I may be his secretary. I should see so much more of him as his typist than his daughter."

From this and similar confessions I built up an

appealing picture of lonely childhood and unfriended youth. I saw Alice, a tiny human atom, drifting on the tide of circumstance, ignorant of the sweet socialities which soften and develop character, left to grope her way unaided through the maze of the emotions. I began to understand her discontent, the bitterness that penetrated her sweetness, the "worldliness" of which she made such pathetic boast, which was really nothing more than a passionate resolve to get the most out of a world which had given her little and had little to give which she really valued. And I began to understand Croxon, too. He was a man incapable of deliberate unkindness. I pictured him sitting solitary in some rough mining camp, with his dead wife's little dog upon his knees, feeding the tiny creature with assiduous hands, cherishing it as the living link with a past that held all the real happiness he had ever known. He sat, with the setting sun at his feet, emotionally meditative, until some dull explosion in the rocks above his head roused him, and he rose, with ice-blue eyes hard and clear, to seek the fortune that evaded him. It was not a lofty battle, and he knew it. He had wistful penetrating hours of vision when he felt its sordidness. Money won or money lost was of little consequence to him because he was aware of a better wealth which life denied him. He was simply a man caught in the mesh of Mammon, unable to extricate himself, unwilling for the most part, tensely eager to win his game for the game's sake rather than its prize; a man who could be unscrupulous, unmerciful to rivals, perhaps dishon-

est, but in his heart of hearts kept an unspoiled tenderness of nature, like a sweet well hidden under a rank growth of thorn and poisonous weeds.

In his rare moments of expansiveness he let me see his heart.

"I think," he said once, "I'm the biggest fool alive. I've got all the money I want, but beyond knowing that I've got it, I don't see that I'm a bit better off."

"Why go on struggling to get more, then?" I asked.

"Don't know. That's where I'm a fool. I suppose it's just to keep the other fellow from getting it. And then there's Alice—I tell myself I'm making it for her."

He sat silent a moment, and then said in an inexpressibly soft voice, "If it wasn't for her, I guess I'd pull out and get a farm somewhere and live on it. Did I ever tell you I was brought up on a farm? Well, I was. I kind of see myself a ragged little barefoot lad running about that farm. There was a swimming pool where I spent whole days, diving and lying on the grass in the sun to get dry. I guess I was really happy in those days. Father beat me now and then, but I didn't mind that because mother always consoled me afterwards with dough-nuts. Those dough-nuts were worth the beatings. If I could taste those dough-nuts again I think I'd be happy. I don't see what men want to live for anyway. I can't see how they make out it's worth while. If I could be back on that farm, and go swimming and eat mother's dough-nuts, I don't say I wouldn't want to live.

I try to kid myself I'm having a good time, and I wish mother could see me—she'd be surprised, wouldn't she? She turned a dollar bill ten ways before she spent it, and passed most of her life trying to persuade herself that two and two made five. But I guess she was happier than I am, and maybe if I could see her coming in at that door with a pile of fresh dough-nuts, all crisp and brown from the pan, I'd be happy too!"

It was a singular confession, but it was characteristic of the man. It was equally characteristic that a call upon the 'phone from some business associate, or the delivery of a telegram (he received scores every day) instantly changed him from a wistful dreamer into a person alert, predatory, formidable, armed for contest, athirst for victory on the battlefields of Mammon. I believe he would have cheated me without compunction and from mere habit if I had had any money to invest. His liking for me, his confidence in me, arose very largely from the fact that I stood altogether outside his world. It is certain that he would not have trusted Alice with any one of his business friends. Among those friends were several youngish men, well-dressed and well-mannered, but his attitude toward them was so hostile that not one of them would have dared to let his eyes rest on Alice. I suppose he knew them too well to trust them, knew very likely private details of their lives which made them untrustworthy.

He knew me only as a friend of Alice, and her liking for me was for him the guarantee of my char-

acter. He accepted me from the first with a generous simplicity, as her friend. I was free to meet her when I would, and he was pleased that I should give her what he called "a good time." Now and then he would go to the play or opera with us, but he was not interested in them, and was always uneasy to get back to his desk. It should be added that he could never be persuaded that what I called my work was in any real sense work at all. He seemed to think that the writing of books was a pastime, not an occupation.

"I guess I'm a considerable writer, too," he once said jocularly, pointing to the immense correspondence on his table; and I knew that it was useless to explain that there was a vital difference between the products of his pen and the results of mine.

His ignorance in this respect was too naïve to hurt my vanity. He would have treated Shakespeare with the same good-humoured misunderstanding. It was enough for me that he allowed me unrestricted companionship with Alice, and I was only too happy to take advantage of my opportunities. Even to me, in these days, the writing of books had become a matter of quite insignificant importance compared with the strong lure of love that drew my will and blood toward Alice Croxon.

CHAPTER V

THE LURE

I

THE winter was slowly capitulating to the spring. There were hard clear days of sunlight with blowing winds, when the sky was a pure dome of blue, crystalline and immaculate. There were golden afternoons, when soft gusts of air breathed through the canyons of the city, and starry nights when a great stillness lay upon the earth. The blood moved more quickly in the veins, the lungs drew a deeper breath, and the mind became more hopeful. The thought of resurrection, parent of so many beautiful analogies through which man interprets his mysterious destiny, took possession of the heart, filling it with living warmth, stirring it with unspoken expectations.

I had all but completed my book, and I knew what lay beyond it. I had made a promise to myself and given a bond for my own honour.

If I was tempted to forget that obligation, I could not do so, with the eyes of Mary Lorimer upon me. Since the night of our conversation on the verandah I had shunned contact with her, and she with me. But we were nevertheless acutely conscious of each other's presence. What she thought of me I could not

guess, but in her eyes I surprised more than once a look of regard, and of something warmer than regard, to which I could give no response. In my thoughts of her, pity and hostility were unequally divided. I was sorry for her, but I was aware of a sort of dominance which she wished to exercise over my mind, and this I resented.

She knew I was in love. One cannot live beneath the scrutiny of a woman's eyes and conceal entirely from her one's private emotions. There is a natural witchcraft in woman, unscrupulous and subtle, by which she discovers the secret of a man's heart. She had never seen Alice, I had never spoken of her, but she knew that I was in love. There were times when I read in her eyes a contempt of me, a scorn of what she deemed a weakness; and sometimes I saw there a rapid flash of fire that suggested jealousy. I was not careful to discriminate her feelings; but I feared their expression, and therefore held aloof from her. I wrote each morning, but every afternoon found me in New York. After a while I found it convenient to spend the night in New York two or three times a week, so that I became a very casual lodger in the house at Oakwood.

These spring days in New York, how shall I describe them! I seemed to be afloat upon a tide of happiness. All things went well with me, miraculously well. My story was attracting attention in the magazine, and winning praise from men whose praise was worth having, fellow-artists who measured its faults and excellencies with skilled judgment and com-

prehending sympathy. Even Herridge was satisfied, reluctantly confessing that perhaps after all I knew more of my art than he did. Henry Trafford, too, was pleased.

"You're painting with a broader brush," he said. "The fault of your early work was too much stippling, the conscious effort to be fine. You're writing now in a sense more carelessly, but it is the carelessness of strength. You've got more to say, and are saying it better, because the message is more to you than the form."

He had never recurred to that more intimate note struck in our conversation in September. He often talked of the war, but it was usually of its wider public aspects, not its personal. Herridge rarely mentioned it. He had apparently accepted it as a normal thing. He planned his life as if it never existed. He talked of going over to England in the late spring, in search of new writers for his magazine. It was his custom to visit London once a year, and he saw no reason why he should not go.

"The war's episodic, after all," he said. "Men's lives, in the main, go on just the same. It's like a fire a dozen streets away—you look at it from your top windows, and then go down to dinner as usual. As long as it's not in your street, why should you worry?"

In contact with these men, so much older and more experienced than myself, my own inner agitation was assuaged. They represented the fundamental good sense of the world. They made me feel that the atmosphere of the Lorimer house was hysteric. I

must guard against hysteria—the hot rush of impulse that betrayed one into foolish decisions! Herridge might be coldly self-centred, but certainly Trafford was not. He had read the real meaning of the war from the first, and had foreseen the ultimate sacrifice it would impose upon us all. But even he had ceased to talk in this strain. At least, he did not talk to me of the war as involving personal obligations. No doubt he took it for granted that I would acknowledge these obligations when the hour came, as I sincerely believed I would; but it was evident that he did not think the hour had come.

Croxon, in his way, also represented the fundamental common sense of the world. I did not agree with him. It seemed to me a mean sort of business to be growing wealthy out of the misery and necessity of the world. But when he declared that some one must supply the needs of an embattled Europe, and as long as he did it on honest terms he was entitled to his profits, he took ground which I knew to be unassailable in logic. And, to his credit, I must state, that he was by no means indifferent to the tragedy of war. He burned hot with rage over the meanness, malignity and cruelty of the German invasion of Belgium.

"They cut off the breasts of women and the hands of little children," he cried with a quivering voice. "They go into battle with a screen of old men and women in front of them. It's said they crucify Canadian soldiers. They're damned swine, they're not men. I swear that as long as I live I'll never eat or drink with a German. I'll never trade with him, I'll

treat him as a foul leper, and I hope all the world will do the same."

His rage was genuine; it was the rage of a tender-hearted man, whose relations with women had always been sympathetic and reverent. He could not conceive the sort of brute who made war by dishonouring women and bayoneting babies. But for all his anger, it had never occurred to him that America was called upon to interfere. God had set her apart on a high secure place above the red flood of battle; it wasn't for her to plunge down into the reeking filth of war. Let her remain aloof but altruistic. Wasn't she doing far more to help the right side by furnishing ammunition and supplies than she could by fighting, in which case she would want all her ammunition for herself? Wasn't that real altruism? Wasn't it true commonsense?

It was hard to tell him that the soul of man never found its true expression in what passed for commonsense, that all the heroisms of the world were achieved by superb outrages upon commonsense.

I didn't contradict him, because I knew I couldn't defeat him in argument. I should have had only idealisms to oppose to his commonsense, and, to speak frankly, I felt that he had so much of reason on his side that I was in danger of capitulation. It is not easy to resist the strong continuous pressure of opinion exercised by men much older than yourself. It is particularly true of the thinker and the artist, that his remoteness from the rough realities of life makes him timid in the presence of men accustomed to handle

large affairs. He knows very well that his grasp on facts is loose and weak. He may be very sure of his idealisms when he rehearses them in solitude, but they are apt to melt into thin air when he thrusts them out into the clamorous market-place of life.

Croxon's attitude to the war was after all the general attitude of New York. The great city sat beside the sea, superbly aloof and complacent, like a modern Carthage. The ships came and went as in the days of peace, the stock-markets were buoyant, the newspapers spoke of increasing prosperity. Vast streams of wealth were poured out night by night in the hotels, restaurants, theatres, and resorts of pleasure. The rich went as usual to Newport or the Adirondacks in the summer, to Florida in the winter, and the cessation of European travel had revived the glories of more than one resort which had been forsaken and forgotten. If the worst came to the worst, men said, America was safe. No European Power would venture to attack her. Some, more frankly selfish, said that America stood to gain by the troubles of Europe. A weakened Europe meant a strengthened America. She had all the winning cards in her hands, and the game was hers if she would only play it with judgment and discretion.

Other men, not selfish, but obsessed by ideas that were the natural growth of a life-time of unthreatened security, used the occasion to preach on the folly of war. In their view all the warring nations of Europe were equally mad. They looked upon the far-off vista of men struggling together on red battlefields

from a calm height of philosophic scorn. Their phrase was, "A plague on both your houses!" They affected to disbelieve the statements and justifications put forth by both contestants. Upon the fearful wrongs committed in invaded Belgium they were conveniently silent. Of the claim of Britain, that she fought for her pledged honour, they were sceptical. All that they saw was a relapse into barbarism on the part of all the conflicting nations, a sudden collapse of sanity,—causeless, inconsequent, capricious. So they preached peace with frantic gestures, talked as though a nation that loved peace could obtain immunity from war by benevolent intentions, incited men to put their own selfish interests before any foolish ethic of honour, which was a mere figment in any case, long ago discarded by the utilitarian wisdom of mankind. Their propaganda could not be disregarded. It was so insistent, so passionately sincere in most cases and so agreeable to human selfishness, that the multitude listened to it, as to a divine oracle, and answered it with rag-time protests that the American mother didn't rear her son to be a soldier.

Neither did she rear him to be a coward, answered other voices, which invoked the great memories of Lexington and Gettysburg. But these men spoke in vain, although they represented all that was finest in politics, statesmanship, and literature. They were pronounced dangerous by a large portion of the press. They were called fire-brands. They had ulterior purposes to serve. They were egoists; eager above all things to keep themselves in the limelight of pub-

licity. So said the general voice, but a steady minority was against them. They spoke as prophets in the wilderness, but, as some dimly perceived, they spoke the language of the future, because they spoke for the souls of men. In all their utterances there was the strong confidence of men who knew that the time must come when men would hear them; and so they held to their course undismayed by public indifference, unregardful of newspaper jibes and denunciations.

To me, moving through this strange world of conflicting opinion, the path was difficult. I was swept hither and thither by the racing currents, pushed out of my path again and again by forces which I could not overcome. I was living in a country not at war, among a people who detested war, and were resolved at all costs to keep out of it. The stern features of Duty, so clearly visible to men who dwelt in a menaced England, were dim and vague to a dweller in an unmenaced America. Had New York been suddenly bombarded by German guns I knew what New York would do, and what I should do. At the first dropping bomb we should all have leapt to arms. Had the merest increment of Hun barbarity and lust defiled the shores of Long Island, within an hour a great flame of wrath would have swept from the Atlantic to the Pacific. But no such things happened, nor were imagined possible. Our Carthage slept beside the tranquil sea, proudly strong, contemptuously indifferent to distant danger. The golden sun of spring shone upon the harbour, and day by day men rose to the secure possession of their hopes and plans

and programmes of pleasurable life. They woke from sleep with no fear of what the day might bring, looked into the eyes of wives and children with untested affection, read the morning's news of distant battles with a casual glance, went upon their way with happy thoughts singing in the brain; and, if they prayed at all, made brief ejaculation of thankfulness to God that in His discriminating wisdom He had put a thousand leagues of sea around America for her inviolate defence.

Here was the Lure. It was like Bunyan's Delectable Mountains, in whose drowsy air men forget the clashing swords of the conflict with Apollyon: like his Enchanted Ground, where men sink into death, without the warning of violent distemper, mistaking it for sleep.

It came to me in the cheerful indifference of the men I met to the threat of war. It was revealed to me in their tacit reconciliation to a world tragedy, as something in which they were not concerned. It was a kind of spiritual languor, dulling the edge of thought, wreathing the brow with the poppies of a pleasant stupefaction. It wore the guise of Croxon's genial commonsense, of Herridge's calm pursuit of habitual aims, in spite of a world on fire. And, alas, it came to me with an even more potent draught of forgetfulness, in my love of Alice. More and more my heart followed her, and, following her, the difficult quests of life were in abeyance.

II

I saw her every day. She would meet me with the pleased alacrity of a child, eager for happiness. We went together to the play or to concerts, we walked on fine afternoons in the Park, we discovered strange tea-houses, and knew the intimacy of shared meals. She was always bright and cheerful, and she did not attempt to disguise the pleasure she found in my society. But she remained elusive, and had a curious sort of inaccessibility. There were moments when it seemed that I had but to stretch out my hand and pluck the ripe fruit of her love, but at the first indication of passion on my part, it was withdrawn, like the vanishing feasts in old-fashioned pantomimes. A blunt insensitive observer might have said that she was merely flirting with me, but he would have been entirely wrong. The challenge of her eyes was too frank for coquetry, the touch of her hand on my arm too casual for design.

She had little girlish theories of life and conduct which she explained with amusing touches of self-satire. All that she really knew of life was comprised in her unhappy school-days and her visit to the Vernons.

"They were always telling us to be good when I was at school," she said, "but they didn't seem to see that what they meant by being good was simply being a solemn prig. I tried it, and it didn't agree with my constitution. How is it that goodness always

wears the wrong hats, and that the other thing at least manages to dress itself attractively?"

She drew a comic picture of the excellent lady who was the President of the school.

"She was plain as a plate, and straight up and down as a broom-stick, and she snuffled. Why is it good people always snuffle?"

"Do they?" I ventured.

"Always. Miss Arabella Tabraham—that was her repulsive name—always had a bad cold. I used to wonder whether her goodness produced her colds or her colds produced her goodness. O, and I must tell you this—it's something you ought to know—she had a real horror of men. She used to deliver a lecture once a month, in a thin acidulous voice, on the perils which young girls encountered by the least association with men. She said men hunted them—they were all bad designing creatures whose chief employment was this wicked form of sport. I'm quite sure no one ever hunted her, poor thing. But you'd think from the way she spoke she'd had the experience of a Cleopatra."

"I think I know the type," I said. "I once had a schoolmaster——"

"No," she interrupted, "don't tell me you ever had a schoolmaster who could have resembled Miss Tabraham. It's against nature. No man, however pharisaic he may be, can possibly equal an old maid turned sour. A spoiled man, spoiled by the wrong kind of goodness, I mean, becomes unctuous and ran-

cid like bad butter, but a spoiled woman becomes vinegar."

"There's a right kind of goodness, then?"

"O, I suppose so. Father's good, I think."

"He's kind-hearted and generous," I said.

"He's a lot more than that," she said earnestly. "He loved my mother, and though she died years ago when I was a child, there's not a day when father doesn't think of her. He's not aware there's any other woman in the world since mother left it. Sometimes I feel as though he isn't quite aware that I'm his daughter."

"It's a wonderful thing when a man loves a woman like that, isn't it, Alice?"

"Yes, and a very rare thing. Most men aren't capable of it. Doesn't the Bible say somewhere, 'He that loveth his wife loveth himself'? O, you needn't laugh. I know lots of things in the Bible. The pious Tabraham used to give us Bible lessons every Friday afternoon, and that was one of her favourite quotations. She said that what it meant was that marriage was merely an ingenious form of masculine selfishness."

"But you don't think it that, Alice?"

"O, I don't know," she replied with a little peal of laughter. "I'm not yet emancipated from my Tabraham, you know. I really do think life is quite romantic sometimes, but just when I've made my mind up to be romantic, I hear old Tabraham's snuffle behind me, and I collapse. I wish she could see us now, having tea together; wouldn't it be fun? I believe she'd

snatch me to her bony bosom, and report you to the police, Sir Gareth."

Our conversations often ended in jesting. The train of thought seemed duly laid for seriousness; the slow red spark of love began to creep forward, when all at once an explosion happened, and all my hopes shot up and fell in firework-stars of laughter.

I often cursed the day when we had invented that play-act idyll of Gareth and Lynette. It had now become a subterfuge which expelled reality. When she called me Gareth, it was as though she said, "Remember, we're only play-acting. Don't be serious, or you'll spoil our little drama."

Now and then the sutberfuge disappeared, and we had grave moments of reality. I recall one of these, on an April afternoon, as we wandered through the Egyptian courts of the Metropolitan Museum. We had gazed upon those vast sarcophagi, shaped from enduring granite for the dust of kings, had looked on that childish form that once bore the dignity of a royal name, and had wondered what her real life had been, and whether she had tasted human love before she died, and what lover kissed her lips before the soft-footed embalmers filed into the frescoed chamber, bearing the instruments of their melancholy trade. We had come at last to that strange Tomb, transported stone by stone from the desert of Sakkara, to be recreated in the indecent bald publicity of New York. We entered the narrow portal of hewn stone, polished with the passage of the centuries, and gazed through the narrow slit, beyond which was the low

pedestal on which the wooden effigy of the dead man once stood.

Alice shivered.

"Come away," she said.

"You're not cold, are you?"

"Cold to the heart," she answered. "It's like looking on Death. I can hear his feet moving through these icy chambers."

We came back to the great hall, and sat down upon a bench. The cheerful light shone through the high windows, and a tribe of girls, led by a smiling teacher, moved with chattering voices across the marble floor, and vanished up the central stair-case.

"Doesn't it make you feel as though nothing mattered?" she said. "Our struggling, our hopes and fears, our wars—man has gone through it all before, and so many times. And what's the use of it all? It all ends in the same way. Gareth, it frightens me. It makes me feel so insignificant. You and I don't amount to much, do we, when we stand in a place like that? I've a feeling that God is laughing at us."

"Perhaps He pities us," I said.

"That's worse. I hate being pitied. I'd rather be laughed at, for at least I can laugh back. But I don't feel like laughing, either."

Her distress was so visible and sincere that I sought to comfort her; but I could find nothing better to say than perhaps these dead people were happy while they lived.

"That's no comfort," she replied. "It doesn't seem

worth while to live and have your heart broken by love, when it's so soon over."

"That young princess we looked at yonder didn't feel like that, I'll be bound. Probably it was her one consolation that she had tasted love before she died."

"And why did she die, Gareth? I can tell you. She saw her man go away to war. They were always fighting in those days, weren't they? And she stood on a terrace one day, and thought what a pleasant sound the Nile wind made among the palms, and was full of happy thoughts, thinking how kind she would be to her lover when he came back. And then she saw a slow procession coming up the road, and heard flutes playing very softly and sadly, and on an open bier she saw a youth, and knew he was her lover—and that was the day she died. And then she was sorry that she'd loved him so much, for it was her love for him that killed her."

"She wasn't sorry," I cried. "She was glad she had loved him, and even glad he'd died like a brave man."

"Then she wasn't like me, Gareth. I couldn't bear to love a man who left me to go to the wars. I should die long before he came back. I should be so lonely. The man who loved me would have to be a man who'd swear he'd never leave me."

"Do you mean that, Alice?"

"I think I do. Isn't it what any woman ought to feel about the man she loved?"

"If I went to the war, Alice——?"

"My dear Gareth, why do you spoil my little story

with personal applications? I was talking of an Egyptian princess."

"I thought you were talking of yourself in the end of the story, Alice."

"Was I? I'm sure I don't know. Let's get out into the sunshine. I feel as if this place was haunted —as if that dead girl yonder was making me say things I'm not responsible for."

She rose quickly, smiling, but her face was pale.

"You see, I can make up a romance almost as well as you," she said lightly.

"Was it all romance?" I whispered.

She made no reply, and we moved silently through the long hall and came out into the sunlit street.

III

We saw a little play one night, so delicately fashioned, so simply and sweetly contrived, that it was like a strain of perfect poetry miraculously interposed among the banalities of the New York theatre. It breathed the intoxicating freshness of youth and first love, and blew over the forgotten footlights the perfume of woods and gardens, so genuine that the soul was bathed and cleansed, as if washed with morning dew. Pierrot stretched out a thoughtless hand to pluck the flower of a young girl's heart; Pierrot came back to find the garden withered, and to know too late that his love was sacred and passionate—that was all the story, but it was interpreted with such fineness of

touch that it became an idyll, a poem that moved the subtlest springs of emotion and imagination.

Croxon was with us that night, and I never saw him so moved. He was thrilled and softened; the unrestrained tears ran down his face, and I could hear his sighs as the pathetic tale reached its climax. When Pierrot sang his remorseful song before the empty altar of love, and buried his face in the withered flowers of the weed-grown garden, Croxon leant forward like a man entranced, as if he too were gripped with an infinite regret for fair gifts misused and precious treasures wasted.

I myself was scarcely less affected, but by different causes. I knew myself gazing into the very eyes of Love, Love the Master-spirit of the world. Nothing seemed worth while but Love. All the poor ambitions of my life dissolved into negligible dust. To win a love like the love of this young girl, so pure and tender, what would not a man give? If he should even pay his honour for it, was it not worth the price? If he should die in the very act of its possession, was he not overpaid by a moment's ecstasy for all his loss? And what if I should die before knowing that ecstatic moment? Life was uncertain: death hid in the withered garden. It would not greatly matter if his arrow found me, if I could die with my lips upon the lips of Love. But to die without that kiss, without that commingling of the soul, here was disaster, tragic and irreparable. One could pass into the fires of hell happy with that kiss upon the mouth; one could

refuse a barren heaven, if that kiss had not been known.

Alice sat beside me, her face a pale flame in the dusk of the shadowy house. Once I touched her hand; she held it fast for an instant. Pierrot's song came thrilling and yearning through the gloom. Pierrot's body lay prone and white before that cold altar. Her eyes met mine, in a long steady questioning gaze, and were withdrawn. When the play closed we rose in silence, fearful of speech. I think we both feared lest we should say too much or too little.

When we reached the hotel, Alice went to bed immediately, and I was left alone with Croxon. He motioned me to a chair, lit a cigar, passed me one, and we were both silent. I rose to go, for it was midnight.

"Don't go," he said. "I want to speak to you."

He began to walk up and down the room with long strides. At length he stood beside my chair, and laid a heavy hand upon my shoulder.

"I once loved like that," he said slowly. "Did I tell you she died when I was away?"

"Yes. You told me your wife died while you were on a trip in the North-west."

"And I came back to find a withered garden, just like that man in the play. She loved that garden. No one cared for it after she died. She had some roses on a trellis by the door. The first thing I noticed when I came back was that the trellis was broken down. They told me the men broke it when they carried out her coffin."

He was not looking at me. His eyes were fixed on things far away.

"And I went away from her just as that man in the play did, but for worse reasons. He wanted to be famous and taste pleasure, all I wanted was money. Money, by God, just that! That's the way we men do. That's why so many of us come back to withered gardens. I wonder whether you're that kind of man."

He removed his hand from my shoulder, and pushed my chair round, so that he gazed full into my eyes.

"I want to ask you a question," he said abruptly. "Do you love Alice?"

"I do. With all my heart."

"Does she love you?"

"I'm not sure."

"You're not sure. Well, I am. I'm not blind. But there's something else I'm not so sure about. I'm not sure whether you love her in the way a woman wants to be loved."

"I don't think I quite understand, Sir!"

"Well, I'm going to make you understand," he said with a grim tightening of the mouth.

His voice became intense and almost fierce.

"You've made love to my little girl," he said, "and I don't blame you. I've never tried to interfere, because I want her to be happy, and she knows better than I what will make her happy. I'd let her marry the bell-boy if she really wanted to. I don't say that offensively—I know you're clever and all that, but if you weren't it wouldn't make any difference. If

you can make her happy I'm content; but that's the point. Can you?"

"I would try. I would give anything to do it."

"You would give anything? Well, let's come to a plain test. You've a great idea of enlisting presently; I've heard you say so, and I suppose you mean it. That means you'd love her and leave her, like the man in the play. You'd do just what I did, and give a hundred good reasons for doing it. I don't care what the reasons are. The fact is what I see: Alice left to break her heart in her withered garden. You'd give anything to make her happy. The words are easily said. All of us say them at some time or other in our lives. Do you mean what you say? Will you give up this mad notion of enlisting for the sake of Alice?"

"I don't believe she'd wish me to——"

"That's not the question," he interrupted. "Women don't speak their wishes. My wife would never set any wish of hers against my plans. When I went on that trip she packed my bag as usual, and smiled cheerfully, and never let on what she felt. That's the way of good women. They think of the man, 'Well, he ought to know,' and, if he doesn't know, they're too proud and sweet to tell him. They're so afraid of being selfish themselves that they make us selfish."

"I would be willing to leave the decision to Alice, Mr. Croxon."

"No, that won't do. Just think it over, and tell me if that isn't plain cowardice. Of course she'd do what she thought you wanted her to do, if she loved

you. As I see it, you've no right to put her in that position. It's for you to decide, and to think more of her than of yourself in deciding."

He began his restless pacing up and down the room again. Presently he drew his chair close to mine, and said in a kinder voice, "I won't ask you to decide to-night. I'm not a religious man, I'm ashamed to say, but when I was married there was one thing the parson said, which I've never forgotten. He asked me if I understood that marriage meant forsaking everything for the sake of one's wife, and I said I did understand it, and would do it. 'Forsaking all other——' I took that to mean giving up not only one's friends, but one's own personal desires for the sake of one's wife. Well, I didn't do it. I didn't forsake anything I wanted. My wife did the forsaking. I lied when I promised to give up everything for her, and my lie has cost me dear."

As I left he put his arm round my shoulder.

"I believe I've a fondness for you," he said. "I'd love to think of you as my son, if you and Alice can be quite sure of one another. But remember what I've said—Alice must be first in all your thoughts—first now and always, or you shan't have her. I've learned my lesson, and if it's come too late to help me, I can use it to protect Alice, and I will."

I went out, walking through the empty streets to my hotel, and all the way Pierrot's remorseful song followed me. It rose in a broken-hearted wail to the cold stars, and with it came the vision of a garden, undeflowered and fresh with dew, where young love

stood tiptoe and tense, waiting the kiss that was the seal of destiny. How could I turn my back on that promised bliss? By what diviner oath could I be consecrated than by that which drew me to the altar of pledged and sacred Love?

IV

In those days even Henry Trafford became my tempter.

He did not mean to be, and nothing, I am sure, was further from his thoughts. He had already pointed out my duty, and he was not the kind of man to permit the capitulation of duty to affection. But in his very affection for me lay a subtle snare. He had a pride in me which a generous father feels for a son. His whole mind was set on my success in literature. I never met him when he did not discuss my work with magnanimous appreciation and seek to guide me with his larger wisdom toward the loftiest goals of the writer.

"From whom much is given, much is required," he would say, with a kindly smile.

And then he would go on to speak of literature as a sacred profession, of a true gift for writing as a great possession, a lamp carried down the ages, whose flame must be sedulously fed, whose extinction was a world-calamity.

"If Keats had only lived another dozen years," he would exclaim, "he might have rivalled Shake-

speare. Even in what he did, a mere boy's work, there were qualities so fine that Tennyson rightly said 'he was the greatest of us all.' "

It was hard to resist the generous implications of remarks like these. Even to be named in the same breath with Keats—think of it! And I knew that Trafford was a man very sparing of his praise. He found little in modern books to admire: "thin duplications," he called them, "of a vanished excellence; at best, poor copies of original genius." I knew that he rarely read the books he published, unless they were histories or books of scientific value. He left the actual business of his firm to others, to shrewd readers and managers who understood the art of trading in books, and little else. They, in turn, regarded him with a certain reverence for his learning and character, but with disdain for his indifference to the practical details of publishing. "If we published the kind of books Mr. Trafford likes," his manager said to me one day, "we should go out of business in a year. Fortunately for him and for us, he's content to leave things in our hands, and rarely interferes with our decisions."

There was no offensive self-complacency in the manager's remark: it was a plain statement of obvious fact. Trafford was too sincere and disinterested a lover of literature for its own sake to be quick at discovering the popular values in inferior books.

It was all the more remarkable to me that he should have become so frankly interested in my work, for I was by way of becoming a popular writer. It cre-

ated a curious situation, for in the mind of the very efficient manager Trafford's appreciation suggested a doubt as to the value of my work, since the kind of book which Trafford most appreciated was usually the book which the manager found of the least mercantile value.

The effect of Trafford's influence on my mind will be easily understood. Without at all meaning it, he re-enthroned literary ideals as the supreme ideals in my life. They had been deposed—at least, partially. I was ready to discard them. They appeared trivial compared with the supreme things for which men were struggling and dying. His too generous praise revived them, and gave them new authority. His sincere picture of the writer carrying a lamp down the road of the ages naturally raised anew the question of the worth of the writer's work. The old selfish plea that genius was sacrosanct, that it claimed exemption from the sacrifices of ordinary men, made itself heard again, and spoke with the voice of reason and wisdom.

"I think you exaggerate the value of my work," I protested. "And I'm not sure whether you don't exaggerate the value of all literary work."

"Do I?" he answered. "Do you think it possible to exaggerate what the great writers have meant to the world? They've fed the mind of the world, are feeding it to this day."

"A very small part of the world, surely?"

"But the dominating part—the part that includes the thinkers, by whom the rest are governed."

"Do the thinkers indeed govern? They don't in New York. He would be a bold man who asserted that the Common Council of New York was composed of thinkers."

"My dear boy, don't be cynical. By the cynic nothing is truly seen. You know very well what I mean. I'm not thinking of politicians. I'm thinking of statesmen. And I'm thinking of men much more important than statesmen; the creators of opinion, the men who supply the dynamic of human thought, the organisers of human energy. To these men the great writers are the sources of light. They draw from them impulse and inspiration. Human life would have suffered very little loss if Alexander had not lived. But it would have been infinitely poorer if Plato and Socrates had never lived. He who adds a page of fine thinking to human literature has done far more to enrich mankind than the man who adds a province to an empire. If the great Elizabeth had never lived England would have managed to do without her, but if Shakespeare had not lived the chief glory of England would be lacking. If we were driven to choose between Elizabeth and Shakespeare we should all vote for Shakespeare, shouldn't we?"

"I've no doubt you and I would, but would men in general?"

"Men in general would accept the verdict because they would know it was the verdict of those who had the best right to pronounce a verdict. And, besides, even men in general are obstinately aware that thoughts do really govern the world. Their very religion make

that evident. They know that Cæsar Augustus in all his glory was a person of much less value to the world than a young Carpenter, in the most obscure province of his empire, who uttered thoughts and truths which have survived the Roman Empire."

"Yes, that's true. But even then there's the question of my poor work, which you value much too highly."

"Your work isn't poor—don't use these shop-worn phrases of depreciation to me. You and I can afford to be honest with one another. You don't really think it poor: why say so?"

He had risen from his chair, and stood beside the fire, gazing at me earnestly, his dark eyes very bright, his face glowing with unusual emotion.

"Shall I tell you what is the chief peril of you young writers?" he said. "It is that you don't realise that literature is a vocation. You don't feel about it as Milton felt, for example. You don't lie awake at night praying God to give you the instruction of the Holy Ghost in your work, as he did. You don't aim at the highest. You're content with good craftsmanship, you're not conscious of a prophetic message. Isn't that so?"

"We're afraid to think in that way. It would appear immodest and presumptuous."

"And it's because you're afraid, because you don't take yourselves seriously, that you produce poor work. Of course I know that for a great many of the men writing to-day such ideals are absurd. All they aim at is instant popularity, and its substantial rewards. It would be waste of breath for me to argue with them

that literature was a solemn vocation, for they're incapable of producing anything that can be called literature, even by the friendliest critic."

"They do their best," I replied, for I was moved to defend my class.

"No, that's just what they don't do," said Trafford. "Most of them could do much better work than they are doing, but they're afraid it wouldn't pay. They do the thing that appears most profitable, but not their best."

"There are such persons as editors, and publishers' managers, and publishers' readers," I remarked.

He laughed at that.

"Herridge, for example, and my own most efficient business manager, eh? O, I admit they hold the doors of literature, and haven't the least insight into what constitutes a good book. Do you remember Captain Nares in Stevenson's *Wrecker?* His ideal of bliss was to lie in a hammock reading E. P. Roe and Shakespeare! He didn't know the difference, and if the men we're thinking of are not quite as ignorant as that, yet their standards of literary value are just as confused."

"They hold the door, however. Don't forget that!"

"They can't hold out against a real writer of genius!"

"They've done it more than once."

"Only for a time. The man of genius always comes to his own in the long run."

"It's often a very long run, isn't it?"

"It's a surer road to fame than the short cut of im-

mediate popularity, which is usually the result which a mediocre mind wins from pleasing mediocre minds."

He was so much in earnest, that I was moved by an impulse of sincerity.

"Mr. Trafford," I said, "you invite me to be egoistic, and for once I will be so, because I know you won't misunderstand me. I do believe in my own work. From my boyhood I've had one great ideal, to write a book that would live. I've never thought of my work as a trade, but as a vocation. I have some sense of gifts entrusted to me, which I must use in the spirit of a sacred obligation, and I'm not ashamed to say I've often prayed that I might use them worthily, and be saved from the dishonour of cheap success."

"I was sure you felt in that way," he said. "If I hadn't been I shouldn't have felt the interest in you that I do. When I read your first book I picked you out as a man, one of the few living men, with a real message that posterity might value. Therefore I say, be true to your vocation. Never doubt that it is real. Don't let yourself be deflected from it. It's the highest of all human vocations, it's an apostleship which demands entire consecration."

"An apostleship which demands entire consecration——" The words lingered in my mind. They set my heart a-glow. They restored the authority of those literary ideals which I had begun to think of as insignificant.

If Henry Trafford was right in his judgment of my gifts, if I had not been wholly misled by those

young raptures which had been a pillar of fire to me when I first conceived myself a writer, what right had I to discard my vocation on any other call from the outside world? Could I serve the world better than by sticking to my task?

I could find plenty of authority for such a point of view. I thought of Goethe, calmly developing his genius under the thunder of French guns, and told myself that a page of *Faust* was of much greater value than anything that Goethe could have accomplished with a sword and gun. Perhaps Shakespeare was confronted with the same dilemma. In an age when all men went to war, he stuck to his job of writing plays, and if he hadn't there would have been no *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Very likely his friends didn't understand him, probably reproached him as unpatriotic. Yet he had done far more to feed the fires of patriotism, and create the pride and love of England with his writings, than they had ever done upon the sea or battlefield. O, there were plenty of instances that could be used in my justification; wherever one turned in history Trafford's contention that he who gave a new thought to the world had deserved better of men than if he'd given his life in reckless sacrifice, stood justified.

As I have said, Trafford did not mean me to make this deduction from his words. He did not realise that in doing his utmost to make literary ideals dominant in my mind, he was turning me away from a duty which he had already declared imperative. He saw me relinquishing my ambition to be a great writer,

and to prevent that disaster he used all his power, all the authority of his affection for me and of his belief in my future.

It was all part of the Lure that beset me. When we think of a lure, we usually think of it as appealing to the lowest elements of a man's nature, to his lusts, his selfishness, his pride. There is a subtler lure, that appeals through a man's finer instincts, through his very sense of duty to himelf and others. But it is not less a Lure, in yielding to which a man may lose his soul. It is not always the world which a man is tempted to accept in exchange for his soul; the soul may be exchanged quite as fatally for a reward on which the world sets no value.

V

Was it not indeed true that my soul was in peril? Could peril to the soul lurk in pure love and pure ambition?

I tried to face the question, but it was with averted eyes. It seemed to me at times as though I sailed on an enchanted sea. The sails hung against the mast; no wind blew from any quarter, and even the tides were asleep. I was a man bewitched, incapable of motion, yet conscious that a single manly thought would break the spell. But that thought did not come. In vain I endeavoured to evoke it; the fountains of my spirit were sealed and silent.

Mirage lay all around me. Out of the bewitched sea rose palms and green islands—the veritable islands

of the blessed. Voices of soft music travelled from them, thrilling me with the promise of an exquisite happiness. Yet I knew the vision unreal. Death and eternity loomed through it, like pale spectres. They glared an instant, monitory and menacing, and disappeared. Beyond the rosy haze of my bewitchment they gleamed like snowpeaks, stern and pure; but they also seemed unreal.

Trafford appeared to have failed me; from Herridge, Croxon, and their kind no help could be expected. For them mirage was real, and they walked contented in a vain show. From one person only, Mary Lorimer, could I expect genuine help, and her I dared not seek.

She made efforts to reach me. She showed me her brother's letters, poor fragmentary messages written with a blunt pencil on thin grey paper, full of boyish heroism and enthusiasm. It was clear that Charles Lorimer had found himself. He was more than content with his lot: he was proud to be where he was and what he was. She put on my desk cuttings from newspapers, sometimes an episode of valour, sometimes a poem which had the distinction of sincerity and pathos.

One night, as I was writing late, she came to me.

"I have news," she said. "I'm going to France next week. I expect to help in a French hospital."

"Does your mother know?" I asked.

"I shall tell her to-morrow. I wanted you to know first."

"What will Grace say?"

"Grace won't mind when once the parting is over. She can manage without me."

"I congratulate you that you have your wish, Mary."

"What about yourself?" she said abruptly.

"I suppose I shall go sometime."

"Sometime! I begin to doubt your sometime. I begin to wonder if you will ever go."

"You've no right to say that, Mary."

"Haven't I?" she said, her voice vibrating with those hoarse sweet notes which it always had when she was deeply moved.

And then, to my amazement and distress, she fell on her knees beside my chair, and took my hand and held it to her lips.

"I know you don't love me, but I love you," she said. "If I didn't know you cared nothing for me, I shouldn't dare to speak to you of love."

"Mary, please don't——"

"Yes, let me speak, for once; it will be the first and last time. Think of it as the one kindness I shall ever ask of you. We women whom men will never love may at least claim this one poor privilege of loving once in a lifetime, and not being ashamed to say so."

"I thought you disliked me, Mary."

"I don't wonder," she said humbly. "I did behave badly to you once, but can't you see that I shouldn't have been interested enough in you to dislike you, unless my interest was capable of being more than liking? And I shouldn't speak of love now, if I didn't know that it's not at all what passes for love between men and women. I think I love you more purely than

any one else can, just because I know that I've nothing to gain by loving you, and never can gain what all women covet most, to be loved in return. No, I've nothing to gain but your scorn. You'll scorn me after to-night; I know that. You'll scorn my immodesty and boldness. You'll say, 'There was a woman called Mary Lorimer, who once made love to me, and wanted to marry me.' So I would: I'm not ashamed to say it. If you were a beggar I'd gladly take the road with you, and beg and work for you. You'll never find a woman in the world who can give you a devotion such as I could give. But I know that this is vain talk. And if you were suddenly to say, 'I'll marry you,' I wouldn't have you, because I know you've nothing that you can give me in return for what I would give you. So, at least, I've this excuse, haven't I—I'm disinterested? I'm not asking anything for myself, but O, I do ask something for you. I want you to be worthy of yourself. What I really love in you is a nobility I've never yet found in any man. There's no shame in loving that, is there? I want to go on loving that, and I want to be sure that it will never fail me."

"You think poorly of me indeed, if you think I'd scorn you for what you've told me, Mary."

"Well, perhaps it's not so much your scorn as your forgetfulness I fear," she said, with a sad smile.

"My forgetfulness of you, Mary?"

"O no, that doesn't matter. In a few days I shall have gone away, and it's not likely we shall ever meet again. It's woman's lot to be forgotten, at least women

such as I am. But it's forgetfulness of your own best ideals. I'm not blind, and I know you're being tempted to forget. Don't yield, please don't. Let me go on thinking of you as I know you really are, true and brave and fine. My life will be lonely, but it will be less lonely if I can think of you in this way. If you fail, I think I should fail too."

She rose from her knees, still holding my hand.

"Will you kiss me, just once, dear?" she said. "We shall not meet again, except in public. Forgive me for saying what I have. It's the kind of confidence one makes only once in a lifetime: I think it is usually made only by the dying. Well, after to-night Mary Lorimer is dead to you, and your kiss is the kiss of eternal farewell."

I kissed her brow.

"No," she said, "the lips. For once."

She went softly from the room, without a single backward glance, with my unpassionate kiss upon her lips.

Here was something more than mirage. Through Mary Lorimer there had come to me once more a vision of reality. Her nobleness stood revealed, and I was humbled before it. I saw her life in its long self-denial, so different from the lives of—well, why should I not say it, so different from the life of Alice. For Mary life had no gaieties; only stern loneliness, austerity, absence of hopes and pleasures, yet beneath all the deep fires of passion. She was of heroic fibre. What a wife she would make to a soldier, what a mother of heroes! I saw her going out to her dread-

ful tasks in the tragic hospitals in France, to live and breathe and work among the most repulsive deformations of humanity, yet content and cheerful. From men she asked no love, only the opportunity for service. Her confession to me was made that she might serve me. Her love for me was adoration of what she thought she saw in me—God knows how little of it I could see—a potential nobleness that responded to her own proved nobleness. And I could not but recollect how Alice had declared that she couldn't bear to love a man who left her to go to the wars, that what she expected in love was an absolute surrender of every larger aim to the claim of personal passion.

I sought on more than one occasion to make my deeper thoughts clear to Alice, but she gave me no opportunity. There was something delicately precarious in our relations, which was in itself an element of delight, and we both feared to disturb it. The spirit of New York had infected her. As long as the day brought pleasure she gave little thought to anything that lay beyond it. I was her friend, her comrade, her lover, but she willed it that I should play the part of friend and comrade constantly, of the lover seldom. Now and again, as on that night at Pierrot's play, she let me catch a glimpse of her soul. For an instant I saw her capable of passion, but for an instant only. She met me next day with the frank air of a pleased child, eager for pleasure, and expecting from me nothing more than a willingness to contrive pleasures for her, and to share them.

"O, Alice," I said once, "won't you let me speak seriously of the things that are in my heart?"

"Why you've told me lots of things that were in your heart, Gareth, or you've said you have. Weren't you serious?"

"But I want you to be serious. When you call me Gareth I feel as if we're play-acting."

"Well, you helped invent the play, didn't you? And I thought it pleased you to remember it."

"So it does, but——"

"But you'd like to drop it? Well, I wouldn't. It's the only touch of romance I've had in a life much subdued by Tabrahamisms. And why should we want to be serious? Aren't we happy as we are? Why spoil things?"

And because I feared to spoil things I was silent. This delicate relationship was so easily spoiled. It was clear that if ever I spoke to her the words of love which were as earnest as life and death, she would choose the hour; I could not. She had an infinite skill in postponing it; she had brought to perfection woman's art of evasion; she found a subtle pleasure in skirting the edges of decision. And in the meantime she offered me the frankest intimacy, displayed the best and worst of herself without reserve, trusted me, and was at no pains to conceal her fondness for me.

So the mirage closed round me once more, and I was content to drift on the enchanted sea. The hour was to come when the mirage was to melt forever, and we were to be brought face to face with unappeasable reality. That hour was nearer than we knew.

CHAPTER VI

THE HOUR

I

In the end of April I finished my book, and placed the last instalment in the hands of Herridge. On the morning when I took my manuscript to the office the death of John Grandison was reported in the papers.

I found Herridge more affected than I had thought it possible for him to be.

"Yes, he's gone," he said. "He was one of the best. I think he had it in him to do much better work than he'd done. You didn't know him, did you?"

"I met him once only, and liked him. I liked the outdoor look of the man, and his outdoor ways. He impressed me with a manliness which isn't very evident in his books."

"No, that's true. Some men exceed themselves in their books: their books are bigger than they are. There are other men who never express their real personality in their books; they're bigger than their books. Grandison was that kind of a man."

"What did he die of? The papers don't tell us much."

"Of moral fatigue, I think; of shock, of horror. He wasn't the sort of man who could look on war as an

adventure; he was too sympathetic. He took things to heart too much. Do you remember his account of the Germans entering Brussels?"

I did remember it, for it was one of the most vivid pieces of writing which the war had produced.

"Yes, and I shall never forget the picture he drew—that endless field-grey host, rolling on for three days and nights, inevitable as fate, and the horrible flight of the poor people, driven before it like sheep to the slaughter. There was something intense in every phrase, something that stung and burned——"

"That was what killed him," said Herridge—"the intensity of his emotion. He poured his life out as he wrote. Then he comes back to England and goes to some friends of his in Derbyshire, and they think how well he is looking, and don't know that there is an arrow sticking in his heart. One day he goes for a walk among the hills, taking his dogs with him—you remember how he loved dogs?—and he's never seen alive again. The dogs come back in the afternoon, and then his friends begin to think something is amiss, and set out to find him. They find him lying quietly with his arm under his head upon the heather. He had been dead some hours. They call it heart-failure; I think it would be truer to call it broken-heartedness."

"Perhaps he preferred dying so, knowing that he'd done something worthy and fine before he died."

"I don't care what he preferred," said Herridge fiercely. "A good writer doesn't belong to himself, he belongs to the world. He'd no right to die. Why,

man, he was only thirty-five. He was just at the beginning of things. He never ought to have gone as war-correspondent. I told him so. God forgive me, the very last time I saw him I believe I quarrelled with him."

"I've no doubt he understood why, and didn't blame you."

"O yes, he understood that I loved him. And he took it beautifully. That makes it all the harder to remember. Well, he's gone, a good man lost because he would insist on doing something for which he was radically unfit. Let it be a warning to you. Grandison was not so sensitive as you are, but what he saw killed him. My God, when and where is this waste going to stop! Is the world to be stripped bare of genius, and turned out naked to begin all over again, with no better capital than the blunt nerves and brutal strength of fighting men to shape its future? I declare, I'm almost sick of being alive. What's the good of being a man of genius, as Grandison was, if you're also a generous-hearted fool, betrayed by your emotions into self-destruction? I've pinned my faith to brains. I've believed that brains ruled the world. It seems they don't. Blind passions are stronger than brains, and the more brains a man has the bigger fool he is capable of being."

He rose and went to the window where he looked out on the slovenly magnificence of New York in silence. Presently he turned round and said in his habitual voice, "Well, I suppose you recognise in what position Grandison's death leaves you? You've taken

his place with the Magazine, and you'll have to go on taking it."

"You mean——?"

"I mean I want another story from you. You've done well. I expect you to do much better."

"I'm glad you think I've gone well, but you know how things are with me. I can promise nothing more at present."

"You don't mean to tell me that you're as mad as poor Grandison?"

"I mean that I promised myself that when this story was completed I would hold myself free to enlist, if the call came. I don't say the call's come. But I am determined to be free from any literary obligation if and when it comes. I thought you understood this. I tried to make it plain to you."

"You did. But now there's something I want to make plain to you. The Magazine has to go on, war or no war. I want your help, and I want it badly. If you can't or won't help me, then I must go to England, and see what I can do there."

"You told me you were going to England in any case."

"I know I did. I've gone over every spring. But I don't want to go this year, if I can avoid it."

"Do you think the risk too great?"

"God bless you, no. There's no risk whatever for the big liners. They're running on schedule, just as if there wasn't any war. The Germans may be fools and brutes, but they wouldn't think of sinking a Cunarder, full of non-combatants, half of them Ameri-

cans. No, it's not that I'm thinking of. It's simply that I don't want to see England in war-time. I'm not sure how far I sympathise with her, for one thing, and that might make things awkward for me. For another thing, I find that almost all the younger writers, among whom I should look for recruits, are gone to the war. There are only the older men like Wells and Bennett and Galsworthy, and I don't want any of them. I'd like Locke, for he's charming, but he's booked already on a five-year-contract. I might try some of the women, it's true; but they all want to write war-novels, and God save me from a woman's war-novel. Faked up newspaper stuff, plus sloppy sentiment—what else can they produce? No, I don't want them either. But I do want you, and I think I've some claim on you. Have I made myself clear?"

"Quite clear; but my dear Herridge, I can't do it. I've been proud to write for you, and when the war's over I'll be proud to go on writing for you. But I couldn't tackle another novel in my present state of mind. Even if I don't enlist, I couldn't. It's been tremendous work to write this one. It's been like writing in a thunder-storm, when you want to jump up every minute and see whether the last bolt of lightning hit anything. I can't concentrate my mind on creating drama when the whole world's a tragedy. I feel as if my work is unspeakably petty, and I'm ashamed of it."

"Well, I'm not ashamed of it, and you've no need to be. You're too emotional. Your nerves are a bit shaken. I'll give you the same advice I gave you once

before—go away into some quiet place and forget the war. Get away from New York and the newspapers.'"

"I'm sorry, Herridge, but it can't be done. Don't think I wouldn't like to. I'd give a great deal to have the kind of mind that can draw its blinds and close its doors against the outside world."

"You'd get it, if you'd only exercise it. It's just a matter of will."

"I wish it were, but I assure you it isn't. I've the best will in the world to write books, and do nothing else; but there's something stronger than my will that won't let me."

"Well, if you can't, you can't," he said wearily. "You're as big a fool as Grandison, but I suppose it's the way God made you. And I'm not going to quarrel with you about it, as I did with Grandison. I don't want to add to my stock of bitter memories."

"Ask me in a year's time, and I'll be proud to serve you, Herridge."

"A year's time! Good God, we may all be dead. No, I won't 'proticipate' as Mrs. Gamp puts it," he concluded with a dreary smile.

"In a year the war will be over, and we'll all have got back to normal."

"Shall we? Well, I'm not so sure of it. I've prophesied the end of the damned thing too many times to have much faith in my own prophecies, or anybody else's. However, the Magazine's got to go on, whatever happens, and so I suppose it's the *Lusitania* for me."

"Then you will go to England?"

"I suppose so. I've no choice. I hate going. But if you won't help me I must find some one who will, and there's no one here I want. If the worst comes to the worst I daresay I can get Bennett."

"When do you think of going?"

"Next week, probably. And look here, just to show I don't bear any malice, we'll have a farewell dinner before I go. I'll let you know the night. You'll come, won't you?"

"Of course I will."

"Very good. And please don't come to see me in the meantime. I'm sore over this business, sorer than you think. By the time the *Lusitania* sails, I've no doubt I shall have recovered my good-humour, and there shan't be any moaning of the bar when I put out to sea, I promise you."

II

Croxon also was to sail on the *Lusitania*. He was looking forward to the voyage as a relief from the great pressure of business which he had endured in New York.

"There's no tonic like the sea," he said cheerfully. "I feel as though I'd grown years younger when I've been at sea for a couple of days. My only trouble is that I must leave Alice behind."

"You're not taking her, then?"

"I can't. It's not the risk, for I don't believe there is any. But I have to travel as fast as I can, see men in London and Paris, and get back within a month, if

I can. Of course she's very unhappy about it, poor child. And I'm unhappy too, for I don't know what to do with her. Have you come to an understanding with her yet?"

"I've come as near as she will let me. She knows I love her."

"I don't understand your modern ways of love-making," he said with a grim smile. "When I met my wife I knew what I wanted within a week, and she knew it too. You and Alice have been pretty much together for four months. I've given you every chance. What's the matter with the pair of you?"

I knew what was the matter, but I couldn't tell him. Alice was drinking her full first draught of liberty, and was intoxicated by it. I could quite understand that Croxon's mode of wooing would be brief and impetuous. His great strength and bulk suggested the cave-man, who got a wife by capture. But such methods were impossible for me, still less practicable with Alice. How often had I wished I could seize her, carry her off, compel her, put an end to uncertainty by one masterful act; but I knew that in forcing love I should kill love. More and more I had discovered the strange complications of her nature, her simplicity and her strength, her elusiveness, her sudden yieldings to emotion and her swift retreats, her adorable childishness and that hard core of commonsense which she called her "worldliness." And so to Croxon's question no reply was possible save one that might have sounded like an accusation of Alice, and that I could not give.

"I can only ask for time," I said. "If you will give me time, I'm quite sure that things will come out all right between us."

"I've given you time," he said. "How much more do you want? I see I've got to put the matter very bluntly to you. I'm going away, and I can't leave Alice in New York. That wouldn't do on any ground. Even if you were engaged to her, it wouldn't do. It seems to me that I'll have to send her back to the Vernons at Fruitvale and I don't believe she'll want to go."

"Is there no one she could stay with in New York, while you're away?"

"It's a queer thing, but there isn't. I know lots of men, but no women. I suppose I could buy some one to be her chaperone, but I'd pity the chaperone."

The idea of buying a chaperone was so naïve that I laughed and Croxon laughed too.

"Alice might kill her, I admit," he said.

At that moment Alice entered the room. She was dressed in a spring costume, with a bunch of violets at her breast, and looked astonishingly fresh and bright.

"Who was I going to kill?" she said demurely.

"We were discussing what to do with you while I'm away," said her father.

Her face clouded.

"Why can't I come with you, father? I think it most unkind of you not to take me. You've always promised to take me to Paris, and now when you could take me, you won't."

"I've told you a good many times, my dear," said Croxon, "Paris is dead and dark. It's no place for you."

"It's no more dangerous for me than you, father."

"I didn't say it was dangerous. But they don't want women there, except the kind of women who can work in hospitals. You've no idea what war has meant to Paris."

"O, how I hate the war!" she said bitterly. "Always the war. People talk of nothing else. And it isn't our war, after all."

"It's everybody's war, because it affects everybody, my child. Don't you understand? You can't go on doing the same kind of things you've always done, as if no war existed."

"I don't see that it's made much difference to you, father, except that it's made you richer. You told me that, you know."

"Yes, it's brought me business, and that's the very reason why I have to go to Paris."

"Father, dear, don't go. I know I'm selfish. I don't want you to go, if I can't go. But there's another reason too; though you won't say so, I know it's dangerous. Aren't you rich enough? Can't you be content to stay in New York with me? You don't know how miserable I shall be if you go. It'll be worse than those times when you left me at Tabraham's. I used to cry my heart out after you were gone. It'll be much worse now, because I shall always think of you as being in peril."

"If it's so perilous, that's another good reason why you can't go, my dear."

She began to weep, and Croxon drew her to his breast, and put his arms round her.

"Can't my little girl be happy without me for one short month? That's all it is. And I'll take you the next time. I'll make a holiday on purpose. Yes, I will. I'll try to get out of business. I've all the money I want, and God knows I'm a fool for wanting more. I'll buy that farm I've so often talked of, Alice. It shall be near New York, somewhere up the Hudson, and we'll have great times together. There now, don't cry. I'll give you my word I'll make plans to get out of business after this trip. But I must go this trip, and, after all, I'll be back again in a month."

"But suppose anything happened to you, father, and you didn't come back."

"What can happen? The sea's a safer place than Fifth Avenue."

"They're threatening things, father. I saw it in the papers this morning. They're warning people not to sail upon the *Lusitania*."

"I wish I could catch the liar who started that nonsense. I'd break his neck for him. Don't you know there are two thousand people sailing on the *Lusitania?* Do you think they'd go if they thought there was any danger? Do you think the Government would let her sail? Of course they wouldn't. I'll call up the office, if you like, and you shall hear what they say. I'll wager there hasn't been a berth cancelled. Just wait a moment, and I'll see."

He went to the 'phone, glad of an excuse to break the tension of the situation, and returned in a few minutes with a smiling face.

"Not a berth cancelled—that's what they report. The warnings that have gone round they believe to be the wicked work of either a practical joker or of some fool German. Now are you satisfied, my dear?"

"I'm not satisfied to be left behind, father. And besides, what are you going to do with me?"

"How about Fruitvale, and the Vernons?"

"Three thousand miles from New York! And that would be three thousand miles further away from you! No, indeed."

"But I thought you loved the place."

"So I do in summer, but it isn't summer. It can be terribly lonely there when the sky is grey, and the lake in flood. And more than that, Vernon's enlisted. Fancy me shut up in a little house on a mountain side, with Mrs. Vernon—two women alone, with the rain beating on the roof, and the woods moaning, and the lake roaring on the beach. I'd die of melancholy. Fruitvale is the loveliest place on earth when you're happy, but I can't conceive any place more hateful if you're unhappy. No, father, if I can't go with you, I'm going to stay in New York. If I can't have you to look after me, I can have Gareth, can't I?"

"So you do appreciate Gareth, eh, miss? I thought you didn't."

She blushed at that, and Croxon nodded at me, with the sly joy of a successful diplomat. I could see what he designed; in another moment he would have forced

us together, and made a definition of our feelings for each other quite inevitable. From such a contact I recoiled, for I had reason to doubt its issue; and so, in desperation, I interposed with a new suggestion.

"Mr. Croxon," I said. "Why shouldn't Alice live with the Lorimers at Oakwood till you come back? I intend living in New York for the next month in order to see my book through the press, and Alice could have my rooms. The Lorimers are charming people, and I've not the least doubt they'd be delighted to have Alice with them."

"Who are the Lorimers?" he asked suspiciously.

I gave him a brief account of them, incidentally painting a picture of the beauty of Oakwood.

"I do believe," I concluded, "that Alice would be quite happy there. And if you don't object, I could see her as often as she'd let me, and give her a good time in New York now and then. You said you wanted a chaperone for Alice; well, there's Mrs. Lorimer, and there's Grace Lorimer for a companion."

"Well, it might do," he said doubtfully. "What do you say, Alice?"

"I don't much care," she said sullenly. "I don't suppose Mrs. Lorimer can be worse than Tabraham."

"She isn't in the least like Tabraham, I assure you, Alice. She doesn't wear the wrong hats and she doesn't snuffle."

This drew a reluctant smile from her, and a loud laugh from her father.

"It doesn't seem a bad scheme," he said. "Alice, my dear, you'll do a good deal to send me away with

an easy mind if you would consent to it. Not now, of course. I'll make some further enquiries. Did you say there were two daughters in the home, Waller?"

"There were, but Mary has gone to France as a nurse. There's only Grace and her mother."

"Very good. You two talk it over. I must go now, for I've a dozen things to see to. And Alice, my dear, remember what I've said. I'll make this my last business trip, if I can. Try to be happy without me for a month, and I'll do all I can to make you happy when I come back."

He kissed her tenderly and left the room.

III

In spite of the light way in which Croxon had treated the threats against the *Lusitania,* I was more disturbed than I cared to acknowledge. Undoubtedly there was some definite source from which these threats emanated. They were clearly not the work of some irresponsible scare-monger or practical joker. They were concerted and detailed. Warnings had been sent through the mails to passengers and had appeared in the press to the effect that any Americans who travelled on the *Lusitania* did so at their own risk.

Was there a real plot to destroy her? It seemed improbable to the point of absurdity. It was well known that she carried neither arms nor munitions. The thing was inconceivable.

On my way out to Oakwood, after my conversation with Croxon, I caught sight of Hausling in the train—the man I had knocked down in Herridge's office. He was reading a German paper, and there was a peculiar gloating expression on his heavy face. He got off at the station before Oakwood, and I remembered that a good many Germans lived there, and that there had been a rumour of a wireless apparatus concealed in the woods. As the train moved out he saw me, and bared his teeth in a sort of ugly snarl. The circumstance in itself was insignificant, but somehow I connected it with the threats against the *Lusitania*. There was both concealed triumph and unconcealed cruelty in the man's gloating expression.

The next day I went to the office of Henry Trafford, on matters connected with the publication of my book, and had a brief conversation with him. It seemed that a member of his firm had intended sailing on the *Lusitania*, but had cancelled his passage. It was this circumstance which had brought Trafford down to the office, which he rarely visited.

"Do you think there's anything serious in these threats against the *Lusitania?*" I asked.

"I think there is," he said gravely. "At all events Simons does, and I don't care to send him to Europe against his will."

"Herridge is going," I said. "He laughs at the threat of peril."

"He would. He's never yet comprehended the real nature of this war, and doesn't understand the German spirit."

"I wish you'd tell me why you think the threat serious. To me it seems absurd."

"Sit down," he said, "and I'll tell you. The whole trouble with Germany lies in wrong thinking. If you know what a nation thinks you can predicate its actions. I suppose you imagine that Germany would never sink a great passenger vessel in cold blood because Germany is a Christian nation, and is at least bound by the traditions of Christian chivalry. Well, Germany isn't Christian, and therefore isn't chivalrous. She's reverted to barbarism. Such religion as she has isn't Christian, it's barbaric. Her God is a tribal God, with all the fierce habits of the tribe. You know what her teachers have had to say about Christianity. They've accused it of enervating mankind by humanity and sympathy. They've denounced it as a religion for slaves. They've parodied and profaned the beatitudes of Jesus, and have said, 'Ye have heard men say, Blessed are the peace-makers, but I say, Blessed are the war-makers, the children of Odin, who is greater than Jehovah.' You might as well expect tenderness from wolves as pity or magnanimity from people who think in this way."

"But to attack and sink a great unarmed liner is against international law, isn't it?"

"My dear boy, there is no international law where Germany is concerned. What do pirates care for international law? What did the Kaiser care for the traditions of honourable battle when he said to his troops, 'When you meet the foe you will defeat him. No quarter will be given, no prisoners taken. Let

all who fall into your hands be at your mercy. Gain a reputation like the Huns under Attila.' He said that in 1900—fifteen years ago. He's bared his fangs since and is a-drip with blood. The viler the atrocity he can commit, the more lustful is he to commit it. And he's infected his whole nation with the same fearful blood-lust. Don't think for a moment the figment of international law will ever stop the German from gratifying his appetite for cruelty—it would be like offering legal arguments to a tiger."

"You really believe that?"

"I don't believe, I know. Germany's already outlawed. She's a pirate. She's bound by no conventions, least of all those of chivalry and honour, which she has openly repudiated. Alas, that I should say it, for there was a Germany I knew in my youth which was modest, humane, pious—the Germany of to-day is insane, and has all the degenerate passions of a vicious madman. I've come to see that. America doesn't see it yet. But she will see it sooner or later, and when she does she'll have to fight Germany to save her own life from destruction."

I had never heard Trafford speak so strongly before. There came back to my memory the words he had spoken months earlier—"The war will attract all the haters of freedom on the one side, and all the lovers of freedom on the other." Since then he had talked little about the war, except in generalities; it was all the more surprising therefore to witness this strength of passionate indignation in him. He spoke

as a prophet, and his worn face glowed with prophetic fire.

"I see you're incredulous," he continued. "So have I been till incredulity was no longer possible. I never thought the Kaiser serious when he told his troops to imitate the Huns. I thought it mere gasconade, though of a very perilous quality. I see now that he really meant what he said. Think of what he did at Louvain. Think of the deliberately planned outrages on women; not the occasional excesses of a drunken soldiery, but outrages deliberately planned and executed with a deadly thoroughness. Think of his use of poisonous gas—something never heard of in modern warfare. There's such a thing as clean fighting, and there's such a thing as foul fighting. Germany has fought foul, and has done so by choice. Do you suppose the Kaiser and his ruffians would hesitate for an instant to send a great liner crowded with non-combatants to the bottom of the sea if they get the chance? What would restrain them? Honour wouldn't. Humanity and magnanimity wouldn't, for they have neither. I tell you the more infamous a deed is the more they will be eager to commit it, and the more detestable it may appear to civilisation the more desirous they will be to affront and defy civilisation."

"Fear and commonsense might restrain them surely. They wouldn't dare to challenge America."

"Diplomats wouldn't, but Germany has no diplomats. She has only armed brutes to guide her. There's not a sane mind left in her councils. She's gambling to win the world. She's lost the first throw, and is

maddened by her loss. All she can think of is to double her stakes, and go on doubling them till she is bankrupt."

"But this folly, if she really purposes it, would be too egregious."

"Well, I still have a faint hope that she may realise it; but I can find no reason for my hope. If she were only mad she might be saved; but she's stupid, and stupidity is incurable. All I can say is, if you've any influence over Herridge or any other of your friends who intend sailing on the *Lusitania,* persuade them not to go. I think you know I'm not a coward. If I *had* to go to England,—I mean if it was an inevitable duty—why, I'd go, and take my chance. But for a man to go just because he's always gone at this time of the year, assuming that the war hasn't altered anything, is foolishness. But I'm afraid that attitude of mind is typical. America isn't awake to the peril that menaces her and the whole world, and she won't wake until some great disaster overtakes her."

I came away from this talk with Trafford with a mind divided. I was so much impressed by it that I went to the Cunard office at Bowling Green, and asked for information. They were aware of these strange warnings which had gone abroad; did they attach any importance to them? A polite gentleman in spectacles was assiduous to reassure me. He informed me that it was the proud boast of the Cunard Company that they had never lost a ship. Was it likely that they would permit the *Lusitania* to sail if there was the least danger? He spoke of the reputation of the Company as

though it were a woman's chastity, a thing too sacred to be impugned. He was shocked at the mere suggestion that anything would happen to the *Lusitania*.

"But I hear some berths have been cancelled," I said.

"That always happens," he replied. "But I assure you that there are not more than usual. Let me show you the shipping list."

He opened a thick volume, and pushed it towards me.

"You see for yourself, sir," he said, "we are absolutely full."

I thanked him for his courtesy, which he acknowledged with studied indifference. I believe he was genuinely hurt that I had for an instant doubted that a Cunarder could fail by any human circumstance to make her port on time.

Yet I was not wholly convinced. As I left the office I caught a glimpse of the grey sea and shuddered. A hundred yards away I saw the White Star Office, and there came to me the memory of the *Titanic*. She also had sailed out in all her proud greatness, and had disappeared. There was something ominous in the memory: ominous and profoundly disturbing.

IV

Two experiences are vivid in my mind as I recall the days that followed. The one is the extraordinary tenderness of Croxon. Every moment that he could spare from his own business affairs he gave to Alice.

She had once complained that Croxon seemed sometimes to have forgotten that she was his daughter; but in these days he appeared to remember little else. He sought to please her with tireless assiduity. He surprised her every day with costly presents. He even took her with him on his daily excursions into the business quarters of New York. He was reluctant to have her out of his sight.

In one of his moments of confidence he said to me: "I feel as if I've not acted right by Alice, though I don't see how I could have acted otherwise. I couldn't take her with me on my many journeys, could I? I had to leave her at Tabraham's. But I feel now how much I've lost by being separated from her, and perhaps she has lost something, too. I've never watched her grow, as some fathers watch their children. I envy the man who watches the minds of his children opening, and notes all their little sayings, and their ideas about things. My wife used to keep a little book in which she wrote down the quaint and curious things which Alice said when she was a child. I guess I've lost that book long ago. I wish I had it. She's grown up without much care from me. But I'll make it up to her, somehow. Let me get this journey over, and I'll plan a different kind of life, and see if I can't be a decent sort of father to her."

This idea of living a different kind of life on his return from Paris had taken a strong hold upon his mind.

"I'm getting old," he said, "and I don't seem to have got much out of life after all. I've been too busy get-

ting a living to live. And it isn't as though I didn't know better. I'm not like these New Yorkers; I don't want the things they want, and I know that the things they get wouldn't satisfy me. I don't give a tinker's curse for society, and all that sort of thing. It's garnished emptiness. I've lived under wide skies, and know something of the bigness of the world. I love the West, the great woods, the lonely lakes, the prairies, the mountains—the freshness of it all, the silence, the immensity. The West for most of the men I meet ends at Albany or Buffalo. They'd be frightened to death if they had to sleep under the stars, with the coyotes howling in the bush. Their idea of travel is to get on a big ship, land at some European port, and hide themselves at once in a hotel which is as like as two peas to the hotel they left on Fifth Avenue. I'm not built that way."

He wasn't; he was a good deal of a primitive man, and this had been for me his most attractive characteristic. I knew also, better than he did, how much of this kind of quality he had bequeathed to his daughter. I had seen her in those days we passed at Silver Lakes and Lost Lode Mine, stripped of all artificiality, facing hardship gallantly, responding with alacrity to the call of the wilderness. It was on this quality in her that I based my hope. I felt that this was the real Alice, a woman of authentic passions, of natural instincts, of large nature. And the real Croxon wasn't the battling speculator, the brigand of commerce, the wild dollar-hunter—these were excrescences of the man;

the real core of the man was sound with primitive strength and virtue.

"I'll have to look at this Fruitvale of yours, when I come back," he said. "I think I'd like to go there, and do something on a big scale. Why shouldn't I buy up all of those little footling ranches, get hold of a big tract of country, develop it, make it a success? It strikes me that would be worth doing. I'd build my house there, and live a real out-door life; that would exactly suit me. How do you think Alice would like it?"

I told him that I wasn't sure, but that I believed she would be happy in such a life. Vernon had spoken of her finding herself there; certainly all the stronger and better elements of her character had been evoked by her brief experience of life at Fruitvale.

"Well, it's for her to say what she wants. And it's for me to give her what she wants. I owe her a great deal, and I want to pay my debt. That's about the only thing I've got to live for. And when I come back I'll make it my first business to see whether I can't give her and myself some real happiness. After all, I'm not too old to make a fresh start. Perhaps I'd grow young again if I made it."

It was clear that all his thoughts centred in Alice. It was as though he had been suddenly aroused to a consciousness of fatherhood. His eyes followed her wistfully; his attitude to her was that of a lover; when they drove out together he would hold her hand. I had seen him before in softened moods, but now the mood was permanent. He was tremulous with emo-

tion when he spoke of her. And in the brightness of her eyes, in the way she clung to him, there was wonder and gratitude and understanding. In those last days they spent together before he left her, they realised a real intimacy, such as they had never known. I watched them without envy; indeed with delight that those long deferred arrears of affection were being so amply paid; and yet, not without the fleeting sense from time to time of the ominous, the intuition that there was the element of a longer farewell than either dreamed of in their embraces.

The other impression that is vivid in my mind is of Herridge.

On the night before the *Lusitania* sailed we had our dinner together; but it was not at all the kind of dinner which he had planned. I expected him, and I knew he had intended, to have his friends round him, and make the occasion high-spirited and joyous. On the contrary I found myself his sole guest, and he was in a very sombre mood. He confessed that his reluctance to sail had grown upon him. He acknowledged that it was quite unreasonable, and he scoffed at any presentiment of peril. Only he didn't want to go—that was all.

"I guess I've got sot in my ways, as the saying is," he remarked. "I've got into a groove, and I don't like being forced out of it. I never really liked travel. It's very disturbing. It has always taken me a long time to get back to normal again. Somehow I dread the disruption more this year than I ever did."

"I wish I were going," I said. "Think of what

you're going to see—a great nation in her hour of supreme effort."

"That's all very well for you. But I'm different."

He hesitated, and then said in an embarrassed manner, "There's something I want to tell you. I'm forty, and ever since I left college I've lived alone. Well, when I get back I'm going to be married. I'm going to marry Grace Lorimer."

"Grace Lorimer," I cried. "I most heartily congratulate you. You've been very secret over it, haven't you?"

"I have. I hate the fuss of an engagement, and so does she. So we've said nothing to any one and plan to get married as quietly as possible when I get back."

"No wonder you don't want to go!"

"Yes, I've found that love makes you timid. You're so afraid of losing it by any chance. Do you remember when you were a child, with some special treat promised you—the Circus for instance, being dreadfully afraid you wouldn't live to enjoy it? You said, 'Suppose I should die, and never see the Circus!' Well, that's the sort of feeling I have. It's a very foolish feeling, I've no doubt, but it's genuine. A man's afraid of nothing when he has nothing to lose, but he's full of fear when he has some great happiness on which his heart is set. Isn't it Browning who has a poem with the line, 'What if the world should end to-night?' End, before he's consummated his love, is what I suppose he means. It's quite likely to happen,

too. My faith in a guardian providence is much weaker than my fear of ironic destiny."

"But that's pure paganism."

"Very likely it is: but after all aren't we all pagans at heart? Aren't the wisest men afraid to sit down thirteen at dinner? Have we ever got rid of the fear of the gods, the suspicion that they are inimical to us, that they hate the happy man, and are always ready to play him some cruel trick? Well, that's how I feel. And I think Grace feels it too. And so I want you to do something for me: cheer up Grace while I'm away."

Of course I told him I would, and he seemed much relieved.

"And don't let her know anything about my foolish fears. You can let her know that I told you that we're going to be married. She'll be glad that you know that."

He went on to speak of Grace with a frankness that was surprising in so reticent a man.

"There's a simplicity about her which took my fancy from the first," he said. "I suppose it's something English; at any rate it isn't American. An American girl knows her way about the world a little too well; you're rather afraid that she knows too much. Life hasn't any mystery for her. You can't teach her anything about sex; she's taken an exact inventory of all that it means by the time she's left High School. I don't mean that there's anything wrong about her. She's clear-minded and fine, and a little hard; but the bloom is rubbed off her. What first attracted me in Grace was her innocence. She didn't seem to know I

was a man, didn't want to make any discoveries in that line—do you understand? At first I thought it was a pose. Then I saw that it was perfectly natural, the expression of an inherent frankness, modesty, simplicity. I felt I could trust her, trust her through life to death. I've lived a self-centred life, though of course I've had my flirtations with women. Grace was the first woman I ever wished to marry."

In talking of Grace he had shaken off his sombreness. He had become almost light-hearted. He spoke of what he meant to do on his return from England; he had the vision of a house on Long Island within hearing of the sea, a small house, built by a bankrupt artist, which he coveted and hoped to get. He was already negotiating for it. If all went well he hoped to be married and settled in it by July.

But his sombreness returned as we parted. We walked up Fifth Avenue together, under a sky of bright stars. Looking up at them, he repeated Browning's line again, with an ironical emphasis—"What if the world should end to-night?"

"Don't come to see me off," he said. "I hate public partings."

"You aren't the only person sailing for Europe," I said. "Croxon is going too, and I intend to see him off; so unless you wish to avoid me I'll see you on the docks."

"O, that's another matter. What I really meant was that I didn't want you to be at any trouble to see me off. Of course I'll be glad to see you. Well, good-night and good luck."

The *Lusitania* sailed next day. There was a larger crowd than usual at the dock. From the upper deck groups of people looked down upon the animated scene, cheerful and tranquil. There were many women among them, and many children. Light-hearted farewells were exchanged, and occasionally I heard jests and sarcasms at the expense of the Germans. Croxon was in high spirits until the moment came for parting with Alice. Herridge I discovered sitting rather disconsolately in his state-room with a letter from Grace in his hand, on which were written instructions that it was not to be opened till he was at sea. Two hours behind her schedule, the great ship swung off from the dock, turned herself in mid-stream like a strong bird ready for flight, and presently became a grey blur in the mid-day blue.

CHAPTER VII

THE DECISION

I

Of that which followed all the world is now aware. Many things have happened since which have overwhelmed the mind with horror, and stirred the heart to furious indignation, but the afternoon of May the seventh, 1915, stands apart in its supremacy of horror.

With the sailing of the *Lusitania* a certain quietness had fallen on my mind. Alice had settled down at Oakwood, delighted with the freshness of the country in the bright spring weather, and had found a friend in Grace Lorimer. Her fears for her father and her resentment at not going with him to Paris appeared to have dissolved. She was living in the dream of what he would do when he returned. Her manner toward me had changed. She was at once kinder and more serious, with a touch of shyness, a new reticence and modesty. What her father might have said to her about me before he went I could only guess, but I was pretty certain that he had helped me in her regard. Her companionship with Grace had also an effect upon her. Grace had told her of her love for Herridge, I did not doubt; and when love

is talked of between two women there is begotten a love of love.

An instinct told me that my wisdom was to let these processes work without active interposition on my part. Alice had "found herself" at Fruitvale. She was perhaps finding herself yet more thoroughly in the quietness of Oakwood with Grace for a companion. I remembered a chance saying in a forgotten book that the true dual nature in each of us consists of what we are and what we want. The latter is the artificial self, the former the real self. To discover what we are, isolation is necessary. So I judged it wise to leave Alice alone as much as possible. She needed a breathing space, and indeed she seemed aware of her need. She was glad to see me when I went down to Oakwood for a brief visit, but she had no wish to see any more of New York. The pleasant life of theatre-going which we had shared was at an end.

On the afternoon of May the seventh I was crossing Times Square, when I became aware of a sudden rush of people toward the bulletin boards. At first I supposed that what it meant was the arrest of one of the noisy orators who at that time were very vociferous outside the *Times* office. A very few moments sufficed to make me aware that something much more important was afoot. The crowd grew with an extraordinary swiftness. A group of hatless men rushed from a neighbouring restaurant, falling over one another in their eagerness. It was like a football scrimmage, except that a curious silence reigned.

The newsboys were rushing to and fro in the crowd, but even they were silent. All at once a singular sound arose, a deep groaning sound, like the wind in a forest. Groups of men detached themselves from the crowd, and stood transfixed, lifting clenched fists to the skies. Two women passed me, weeping, their arms round one another's shoulders. A man, obviously German, ran across the street, with a wild-beast cry of hellish glee. I pushed my way through the throng, and snatched a paper from a newsboy. Then I knew the meaning of it all—in big black headlines I read the news, *The Lusitania sunk off the Coast of Ireland.*

My first impulse was to run; somewhere, anywhere, just to—run; the impulse of the stricken beast with an arrow in his side. It was as though the solid world had exploded at my feet. Something monstrous had happened; a devilish hand had been thrust up and was plucking down the sky. Panic seized me. I did actually run down Forty-third Street, shouting incoherent words. Then, becoming conscious of my folly, I stopped, and tried again to read that fatal head-line. The words danced before my eyes. I felt sick. I went into a tobacconist's and was conscious that my voice ran up and broke into a treble cry as I asked for a cigar. The shop was one of a long line of shops run by a German firm. I might have known that by the name over the door, had I been observant. The man behind the counter, suave and stolid, with a close-cropped Teuton head, regarded me with a kind of scornful pity. He probably believed that I was drunk.

I leant over the counter and whispered hoarsely, "The *Lusitania's* sunk."

"Serve her right. She shouldn't have sailed. She was warned not to," he said calmly.

I wished to strike him, but my hand seemed paralysed. I could only glare and nod at him. A storm of rage swept over me, and left me speechless, helpless. Was I going mad? With a strong effort I pulled myself together and came out into the open air. There I read the line again, and managed to gather the sense of the paragraph that followed it. And then the realisation of the tragedy broke upon me. The *Lusitania* had been torpedoed, without warning, and fifteen hundred lives were lost.

Could it be true? A small desperate voice at the back of my brain whispered that perhaps it wasn't. Atrocious lies had appeared before, triumphant or dismaying rumours, which had been swiftly disproved. In the very first hours of the war hadn't a report gone round the world that the British Fleet had met and annihilated the German, a report declared official and universally believed, yet absolutely destitute of truth? There was always uncertainty about things that happened at sea. It was quite upon the cards that the Germans might have invented the report. But in my heart I knew that the thing was true. The disaster had been definitely planned, and the plan had succeeded. The great ship, so proudly confident, which I had seen sail out in all her strength and beauty, was at the bottom of the sea. She lay there upon the ocean sand—her wounded length still quiv-

ering with the blow of death—and down through the dim green water there slowly gathered to her those whom she had sheltered—her silent children, the crowded faces of the dead, open-eyed, with hair streaming out like sea-weed in the eddies—open hands that clutched at nothingness—the feet that had danced upon her decks thrust out helplessly, the lips that had been full of speech silent, disparted, agonised—O, it was horrible! My spine turned to ice at the vision. My heart seemed about to stop. I leaned helplessly against a lamp-post, and once more a qualm of deadly sickness shook me.

There was a block in the traffic; the crowd had increased, till it seemed as though all New York was out of doors at once. I became conscious of a limousine drawn up against the curb. Within it sat a woman, beautifully dressed, whom I recognised as a popular actress. She lowered the window and was speaking to me:

"What is it? Will you please tell me?"

I handed her the paper.

"My God!" she cried. "My mother was on the *Lusitania.*"

She spoke in a deep low voice, and yet it seemed to me the voice mounted up into the sky, and rang there, like an accusing trumpet.

Her voice brought me recollection. Her mother was there. Was not Croxon there too, and Herridge? Herridge, with Grace Lorimer's letter in his hand? Had he gone down with that first and last love-letter in his grasp?

Out of the chaos of my thought there emerged an imperative and instant duty. I must find out the truth about Croxon and Herridge.

I ran to the subway, and in twenty-five minutes was at Bowling Green. Outside the Cunard office a great crowd had gathered. The doors of the office were closed. The tall windows were red with the setting sun, and vacant of all life. An official stood on the steps. He was saying something, and what he said was passed from man to man in the silent crowd. It reached me at last. He confirmed the fact that the *Lusitania* was sunk, and begged the crowd to be patient. It would be some hours, perhaps the next morning, before it would be possible to get a list of the survivors.

"The survivors!" Were there any? The newsboys were selling a special late edition of the papers, in which was a slightly amplified version of the first brief telegram. It stated that the ship had sunk in fifteen minutes. Fifteen minutes—what a frail crowded bridge was that between life and death! How few could cross it! Again there came to me the overwhelming vision of the scene—the wounded ship stopped suddenly like a bird with broken wings, heeling over in the green surge, slowly settling down, her crowded decks awash; what chance of escape was there for any one? No doubt there would be order, courage, discipline to the last. The heroic whisper would pass round from lip to lip, "Women and children first." Croxon and Herridge would obey it. They would meet their fate with manly courage. I

could fancy Croxon, who had met peril many times with iron nerves, encouraging the timid and the dismayed; I was sure Herridge would meet death with stoicism. It would be a miraculous chance indeed if they were among the survivors.

But even with the figures of Croxon and Herridge very clear before my mind, it was the collective tragedy that I saw most vividly. There was an immense poignancy in the thought of that great ship gone forever; it was a catastrophic thing, like an earthquake that destroys cities, and changes the features of a landscape. I knew her so well. I had sailed on her, with a calm delighted sense of her strength, her order, her security. There was something divine and indomitable about her. She was to me a living entity, a friend, a brave comrade. She moved across the waters with a planetary rhythm; she belonged to the steadfast forces of nature, to the stars and suns and revolving heavens. The world could not go on without her. With her disappearance the stability of all human things was shaken.

A group of men passed me, shouting vigorously, and disappeared in a German Rathskeller. They waved their hats, and one carried his upon a walking stick. No one interfered with them. People turned their heads as they passed, looking at them in cold disapproving silence, but that was all. They could actually rejoice in the disaster! They could be gleeful at the thought of fifteen hundred bodies drowning in the sea. The strange frightened words which Alice had spoken to me four months before in the

Waldorf, flashed across my mind like a white flame: *"Something's happening to the world that isn't rational. It's like a great ship that's turned turtle. All the big familiar rooms are filled with black water, and we're just scrambling up the keel and clinging there. The world's gone topsy-turvy. God's hand has pushed it over."*

"God's hand"—no, not God's hand, Alice. Rather a hand thrust up out of Hell, that would throttle all the good and fair things in the world. It is the Devil's hand that has pushed the world over; and these coarse-jowled Germans, doubtless drinking lager in the Rathskeller, with cruel glee over the *Lusitania,* are his servants.

"I'm frightened," she had said; and the memory of her words recalled me to my present duty.

"The big familiar rooms are filled with black water and we're just scrambling up the keel and clinging there."

Here was the thing itself which she had imagined in that premonitory speech. I wondered if the news of the calamity had reached Oakwood. No doubt it had. And Grace Lorimer, where was she?

I went into a shop and 'phoned Grace at the office. Was she still there?

Yes, she was there. She had been hoping that I would call her. She was waiting for me. She dared not go to Oakwood alone.

"It isn't really true, is it?" she said piteously.

"Yes, it's true. Wait for me. I'm coming."

She met me at the door of Herridge's room; she was fully dressed, ready to start for Oakwood.

"We must be brave for the sake of Alice," were her first words.

I had expected tears and lamentations, but she was perfectly composed. She astonished me. She bore a strange resemblance to Mary, which was new and startling. Her brows were drawn in the same level line, and her features, so much more regular than Mary's, had the same pale sternness. A thousand times since I have asked how it is that women bear the shock of sudden tragedy so much better than men. Is there a finer resilience in their natures, the result of a more nobly tempered patience? Grace Lorimer had not her sister's vital strength. I had known her weak, I had thought her selfish. There was neither weakness nor selfishness in her now. In a moment she had been magically purged of both.

"Her father may be among the survivors," she said quietly. "We must make her think so. Shall we go?"

She opened the door of Herridge's room, looked into it for a wistful instant, and closed the door softly.

"I'm quite ready," she said.

II

There are crises of emotion which can never be described. They may be perfectly expressed in the

pregnant phrase of a great poet, still more poignantly uttered in the wordless passion of music, but for the ordinary man they are inexpressible. Language fails because it becomes insincere. The time-worn phrases of human grief become brittle, and snap under the stress that is laid upon them. In such hours words lose their significance, become inadequate and unintelligible, and ring hollow on the ear of the spirit. It was such a crisis which now confronted me.

When we reached Oakwood the dusk had fallen. During all that melancholy journey Grace Lorimer had not spoken. She sat beside the window of the car, with eyes fixed upon the pale green sky, in which one bright star burned. I took her hand in mine; it was indifferent and unresisting as the hand of the dead. It was not until the familiar woods came in sight that a slight shudder shook her, and her eyes met mine.

"We must be brave, mustn't we?" she whispered.

There was no one we knew upon the little station. We took the road beneath the woods, until presently the house came in sight. There were no lights in the windows. It looked dark and tenantless. "That is a sign she knows," said Grace.

She swayed as she spoke, and leaned heavily upon the garden-gate.

"I can't grasp the truth," she said. "It all looks so peaceful here—nothing altered—everything just as it was. This dreadful thing—I can't understand how God could let it happen. I've been trying to think it hasn't happened. But I know it has. There's some-

thing in that dark house that makes me know it's true. God's never given me what I wanted. It would be like God to give me something and then snatch it from me."

This was her only moment of weakness. The recoil came instantly. She drew herself up proudly, and together we entered the garden-gate, and walked over the dark lawn.

We entered the house. No light burned in the hall, and the house was silent. Through the open door of the dining room I saw the two tall windows of the room, like grey spectres, gleaming faintly. From the upstairs rooms came the soft murmur of a voice. We went up, and found the door of Mrs. Lorimer's room ajar. In the dim light we saw Alice huddled on the bed, her face buried in the pillows, and Mrs. Lorimer praying beside her. The open Book of Common Prayer was in her hands, and I caught the pathetic phrases of the Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Easter,—"that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found."

Alice sprang up at our entrance, gazing on us with wild eyes.

"O Gareth!" she cried.

The arms of Grace were round her, but it was to me she turned her eyes. She said no other word.

Mrs. Lorimer beckoned me from the room. Outside upon the landing she told me that the news had reached them in the evening paper. Alice had been the first to read it, and had fainted.

"I've been trying to make her believe that it may not be true," she said, "and that even if it is, her father may not be lost. She is not to be convinced, poor child. She is very bitter. Is there anything that we can do?"

"Only wait for further news," I said.

"Then I think I will leave her with Grace. Perhaps Grace can comfort her better than I. It's natural that the young should turn to the young in their grief, isn't it? I am an old woman, all I can do is to pray, and Alice resents prayer I'm afraid, although she did let me pray with her. What can we do but pray in hours like these?"

"Mrs. Lorimer," I said, "there's another heart that's breaking beside Alice's. I would not have told you at any other time. But you know that Mr. Herridge was on the *Lusitania,* and you ought to know that Grace was going to marry him on his return. They meant it to be secret."

"A secret from me, her mother?" she said proudly.

"From every one. Herridge wanted to get this voyage over before he made plans for the future. He only told me, who am his friend, on the night before he sailed. I think he was afraid to count upon his happiness—he dared not publish it."

"I can understand that. Yes, I've felt that when I was younger,—the fear of making too sure of happiness—but Grace might have told me. I think I could have helped her."

And then, as if there came to her a sudden realisation of what Grace must be suffering, she said in a

low voice, "O, I must go to Grace! She will need me more than Alice."

"No, please don't," I said earnestly.

"Why not? Do you think Grace doesn't want me?"

"Not that, dear Mrs. Lorimer. She'll want you presently; you will be the only one she will want. But if you went to her now you'd break down her self-control. Just now she's wonderful, all her thoughts are set on comforting Alice. Her strength lies in that—she's not remembering herself. But if you go to her she'll remember. At the first touch of sympathy she'll break. She knows better than you and I how to face the dark hour. Leave her alone. Believe me, it's wiser."

"It hardly seems possible that Grace——"

"She's your daughter. I think she's acting as you would act."

"O, far better than I would act! I don't think I have that sort of strength. But one thing I do understand—sympathy can hurt you more than callousness. I have had to conquer my own griefs in silence. I never quite realised it till now. I never understood why when Christ entered Gethsemane he made all his friends but three stay outside, and presently left even them, as he went a little further. I understand now."

We went downstairs into the familiar sitting-room. A pile of jonquils lay upon the table, and beside them the evening paper.

"Alice was arranging the flowers when the paper came," she said. "She was very happy."

And then, with that instinct for action which will make a woman go on with habitual duties even when a world sinks beneath her feet, she began to gather up the poor flowers, and put them in a glass vase. When she had done she said, "I hope you won't think me selfish, but I should like you to tell me something of Mr. Herridge, if you feel you can."

I related to her briefly much of what Herridge had told me in that last conversation, the loneliness and austerity of his life, his hopes for the future, his genuine devotion to Grace; to which I added my own appreciation of his powers, my own sense of obligation to his friendship. She listened with grave eagerness, and said, "If he is that sort of man he need not have feared to tell me about his love for Grace. It pains me to think I did not know him. If—if he doesn't come back—I could have been of so much more comfort to Grace had I known him. It would have helped me with Grace."

A maid entered, saying dinner was served. I protested that I could not eat.

"But you must. Try to do it. We have a long night and I fear a terrible one before us. We can't have you breaking down, too. Please come in to dinner."

She laid her hand on my arm, with an air of stately command, with a slight affectionate pressure. I felt her hand tremble on my arm, but her face was calm. Her self-control steadied me. I still felt sick and dizzy with emotion, but I realised—she made me realise—that she looked to me for strength, that she

was commanding all her resources of fortitude to meet the crisis, and that I must do the same.

After dinner we sat before the crackling log fire. The portrait of Charles Lorimer looked down upon us from the mantel, the jonquils lifted their delicate heads in the warm air, the polished old-fashioned mahogany furniture reflected the cheerful blaze. It was all so peaceful, so stable in its fixed order, that the sense of tragedy receded. The soft narcotic of use and wont lulled my nerves; only, at intervals, there shot through the heart the sharp pain of reality, the desolating knowledge of irremediable loss.

In that hour Mrs. Lorimer opened her heart to me —that proud, sensitive, tender heart which she had concealed from me under a cold and distant manner. From a great height of wisdom, hardly won, she spoke of life and death and eternity, of the unreality of life and of the deep reality of things unseen.

"One glimpse of eternity," she said, "makes everything else seem unreal. I discovered that when my husband died."

Beyond that single sentence I do not recall anything she said; but in its effect her speech had the quality of music, which draws the sting of pain and is infinitely soothing and consoling.

About ten o'clock Grace entered the room. She had put on a plain black dress, which accentuated the pallor of her face.

"Alice is asleep at last," she said. "She is quite worn out."

"Won't you go to bed and get some sleep too," her mother said anxiously.

"I? O, dear, no; I feel as if I should never sleep again."

She knelt beside her mother, and so we three sat looking into the red embers of the dying fire.

Presently she said, "This waiting is horrible. Can't we do something?"

"I can 'phone the Cunard office," I said.

"Do. Anything is better than this horrible suspense."

I 'phoned the office. They had no list of the survivors, but were expecting it every minute. They would 'phone me the moment they had news.

The hours passed. The fire had quite burned out. No one had drawn the blinds, and through the tall windows we could see the grey light spreading. A bird began to sing, very sweet and clear. Far off, within the woods, a cock crowed cheerfully.

The 'phone rang. Its shrill insistent summons filled the silent house.

I went to it, and a thin far-off voice called my name. "You wished to know—yes—Mr. Theodore Croxon, Mr. Milton Herridge—we deeply regret—not among the survivors.—No—little hope. We fear—lost——"

I turned, and in the spectral dawn-light saw Alice coming down the stairs. She was in her night-robe, her dark hair falling round her shoulders, her feet bare.

Her lips shaped a question rather than uttered it.

I shook my head.

They were both gone: the father, the lover; and yet outside the birds were singing, and the grey light was melting into the gold of a glorious spring day.

III

By noon the world was shaken with the news. It was as though a long shudder of dismay and horror thrilled America from coast to coast. The red hand of war had suddenly been stretched out across the sea, and had touched every home in the American Republic.

Men asked one another in dull amazement what kind of war was this that had no scruple of pity, of chivalry or humanity to restrain it? It might be granted that Germany had the right to seize the *Lusitania,* if she could. She had the right to confiscate her cargo, to hold her as a prize of war, to capture and tow her to the nearest German port, and in the event of being unable to do so, to sink her after due warning, and after giving proper opportunity to her passengers to save their lives. She had done none of these things. She had sunk her without warning. It was an act of deliberate murder. The bloodiest pirate of the Barbary Coast or the Spanish Main had never acted with such a callous indifference to human life. Captain Kidd was a saintly gentleman compared with the men who had deliberately sunk the *Lusitania.*

Men prominent in public life had perished. Still worse, helpless women and children had been foully

murdered. They had trusted to the rights of nations, and the law that protected non-combatants. Those rights and laws had ceased to exist.

Up to this hour, in spite of all that had happened in Belgium, American opinion had not been convinced of German turpitude. The reports of her planned and systematic outrages on women and children had been received with incredulity. Men who, in the years before the war, had had business and friendly relations with Germany, whose sons had been educated at German Universities, whose daughters had studied art and music at Munich and Dresden, found it impossible to believe that the German character had suddenly become brutalised and bestialised. They were ready to admit that there was a reasonable motive in her desire for expansion. They had long admired her efficiency, and had refused to believe that it could become the deadly efficiency of murder and assassination. They had been her friends: they desired to be her friends. They saw now, in a flash of blinding light, that the Germany they knew had disappeared; instead of it there had arisen another Germany, as indifferent to humanity as the cannibals of New Guinea, and more ruthless in warfare than the naked savages of Dahomey.

I could be of little service to the grief-stricken household at Oakwood. Mrs. Lorimer gently intimated so much, saying, "Leave Alice and Grace with me." The doctor was in attendance. He shook his white head gravely, and spoke stereotyped words about shock—absolute silence—need of quiet. There

was nothing for me to do but return to New York and await events.

In the long corridors of the Waldorf I found a drifting crowd, moving slowly to and fro, discussing in low voices the latest scraps of news. There was but one question on every lip, "Does this mean war?"

"If this won't make America fight, nothing will," I heard many men saying, men with pale determined faces, who spoke in bitter passion.

Among the employées of the Magazine I found the same temper. These men had honoured Herridge, and his death had kindled them to fury. The younger men stood about in groups, discussing what they would do if war was declared. Hardly one of them doubted that war was imminent.

Then came Sunday, a Black Sunday for America. The Churches were thronged, and the services had a note of funeral solemnity. There was a waiting aspect in the crowds—the look of men conscious of impending climax. Scraps of information, gathered from the Sunday newspapers, were discussed in whispers among these alarmed and serious worshippers. It had become known that the German Ambassador had been vainly interviewed, had shaken off his questioners with an oath, and had refused to express the least sentiment of regret for the crime of his country.

In the German Churches there was either truculent silence, or open condonation of the crime. There were some conspicuous exceptions among religious teachers of German ancestry. One of these proclaimed with passionate indignation that from that hour he

repudiated Germany and all her works, and was ashamed that German blood flowed in his veins.

The Sunday passed in heavy foreboding. Old men, who had fought in the Civil War, recalled the day when Fort Sumter fell, and said that never since had there been a time when men's souls had been so charged with moral indignation. The Monday papers did much to deepen this indignation. The stories of personal heroism, the calmness with which American men of high social standing had met their fate, the last words of Charles Frohman that death was life's most beautiful adventure, the sense of genius and character and commanding abilities lost to the world, the brutal pitiless folly of the act—all these things helped to swell the growing flood of anger.

As the final invocation to the rising patriotism of the people came the knowledge that the foul act had been celebrated in Germany by public rejoicing, by school holidays and the ringing of Church bells, by the issue of a medal, struck long before in anticipation of the outrage. For the cruelties of war the usual plea had been that of "regrettable necessity." But in this case there was no spirit of regret; on the contrary loud boasting, vainglorious congratulation, as if the sinking of an unarmed vessel were an heroic act, of which the nation might be proud! Even in New York this strange attitude of mind was not wholly concealed. Secretly, among themselves; publicly, as far as they dared, Germans indulged in ghoulish glee over the disaster. Their most sober-minded papers justified it. They pointed to the warnings that

had been issued, as if Germany had the right to dictate how and when American citizens should sail the seas. They made it clear, as the entire voice of Germany was to make it clear, that the act was premeditated, deeply plotted, and executed in deliberate defiance of international law.

And then, in the very hour when the anger of the nation grew to boiling-point, there came that unluckiest of speeches commending nations which were too proud to fight.

It was obvious that the phrase had no reference to the sinking of the *Lusitania*. It had no immediate relation to practical affairs. It was the expression of a remote idealism. But men did not stop to consider these things. They interpreted it as an expression of unwillingness to avenge the *Lusitania*, and they knew that the world would interpret it in the same way. The pacifists seized upon it as the justification of their views. The pro-Germans quoted it with malignant scorn. Others there were who felt it to be a deadly blow to national honour, and were sick with shame. To them it sounded like the death-knell of a great people; of a people who had been great, but were great no more.

To me it came with a shock even more painful than the shock caused by the sinking of the *Lusitania*. I was not an American, but I loved America. My best friends were American. I was proud of America's history, of her traditions and achievements, and confident of her future. I counted myself her son, her proud and loving son. It was as though I saw my

mother publicly dishonoured. I am not ashamed to say that tears of shame and rage filled my eyes as I read the fatal words.

It was some slight consolation that I found my anger shared.

"That is not the true voice of America," said Henry Trafford. His hands trembled as he spoke and his face was tragic.

No: it was not the true voice of America, nor did it express the true mind of the speaker, but in that deep silence which fell upon the land in this hour of consternation, it had the authority of an oracle. Whatever the words were meant to imply, however innocent their real meaning, the mischief was done. In moments of national perturbation the herd instinct is strong. Men huddle together, not knowing how to act, and a word can drive them. "Too proud to fight" —the phrase really meant nothing at all. In an academic address it would have passed unnoticed. Unfortunately a great calamity afforded it a sounding-board, which sent it vibrating round the world. It would reach the soldiers in the trenches, it would penetrate the darkened homes where American men and women mourned their dead sunk deep in the cruel sea, it would be reported wherever a printing-press existed, it would be received with ribald laughter in the beer-gardens of Berlin, it would be commented on with pity more than anger in the cabinet councils of Paris and London, it would echo round the shores of solitary islands of the southern seas, and report itself to lonely watchers on the Arctic circle. It could never be re-

called. History would record it. It would live with the durable vitality of stars and planets. The mischief was done, and could nevermore be undone.

IV

To Trafford I poured out all the tumult of my mind. He was the only friend I had left in New York. He went with me to the Cunard Office, where he was well known. We were shown into an inner room, and were received by a grey agitated man, whose face was ravaged with grief and sleeplessness.

"I have but a few minutes," he said. "I have been up all night. What can I do for you?"

Trafford explained our errand. The man silently pushed toward us the latest cablegram, and a typed list of the survivors.

He rank a desk-bell, and a clerk appeared.

"Have you any special mention of Theodore Croxon and Milton Herridge?" he asked.

"I will see," said the clerk. "There's a cable from our man at Queenstown which is now coming in."

He returned in a few minutes.

"There is no mention of Mr. Herridge," he said; "but I find Mr. Croxon's name. There's a Mr. Davis who was saved—he's a Welsh colliery-owner, I think. He says that Mr. Croxon behaved splendidly. He rescued several women, and got them into the boats. He was a fine swimmer, and he and Davis swam together for a long time. They were clinging to a piece

of wreckage together, when Croxon suddenly disappeared. He was never seen again."

"I'm afraid that's conclusive," said the official. He tried to speak calmly, but his voice quivered, and he passed his hand over his tired eyes.

"I would rather have died than this should have happened," he said. "The *Lusitania* gone! It seems impossible."

He looked up into Trafford's face, like a startled child discovered in a fault, instinctively defending himself.

"I never thought they would do it. O yes, there were warnings—I admit it—but we all thought them absurd. There are things I can't understand. They say the *Lusitania* was going at half-speed. Some one had given orders to that effect. Who, I would like to know? It was suicidal under the circumstances. Mr. Trafford, there has been treachery somewhere. I'm sure of it. We've been betrayed by some one. The thing itself is horrible enough, but this certainty of treachery makes it much more horrifying."

"It isn't your fault," said Trafford.

"No, it isn't. I know that. But nevertheless the blame cannot be evaded, and I must bear my share of it. I am a very unhappy man, Mr. Trafford, a man who will never be happy again."

We left the stricken man, came out into the fresh spring day, and drove back to Trafford's house.

There, in the quiet library, where we had so often discussed books and literature, I told Trafford all about my relations with Croxon, Alice, and Herridge.

What a mockery those former bookish conversations seemed! How unreal all these literary enthusiasms, how narrow, and how selfish! I could fancy ghostly hands dismantling the library, the long rows of books dissolving till the walls were cold and bare as the walls of a mausoleum, the pale wraiths of Croxon and Herridge hovering over us, uttering incantations, declaiming woes, invoking vengeance on intolerable wrongs.

"Do you remember what I once told you about this war," said Trafford, "that it was really the break-up of the world we know, that in the end it would range all the free peoples on one side and the servile peoples on the other? Well, I think that hour has come."

"Then you think America will fight."

"She must. She must fight or perish."

"Do you mean she'll fight now?"

"Not immediately, I think. But since last Friday she has moved a whole hemisphere nearer to the conflict. She's involved in it now, beyond all chance of escape."

"'Too proud to fight!'" I quoted bitterly.

"That's but a passing catchword. Dismiss it from your mind. All that it means is that America won't fight for pride, but I greatly mistake her, if she won't fight for liberty. Yes; she'll do that, when she sees that her own liberty is at stake. And she knows that it is at stake now."

"Then she will declare war on Germany?"

"Not immediately, I repeat. We're too diverse, too inchoate as a people—we're not fused. The fire of

moral indignation is lit and can never be put out; but it hasn't penetrated very far yet. It will seem to die down, but it won't. It will reach the centre finally, sooner than we think, perhaps, but we must wait and be patient."

"But I can't wait," I cried.

"I'm not asking you to," he said gravely. "For you I think the hour has come."

He laid his hand upon my shoulder, and I realised something anointing, something consecrating in his touch.

"I wish I could go," he said. "How gladly would I go. If I were only young! But perhaps before it's over I may do something, too. I've lived in ease and comfort too long. I'm a poor old Ulysses, but like Ulysses I would like to do some work of noble note before the end, and I say sometimes, 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.' Believe me, if I had but one thing to ask of God which I knew that He would grant me, I would ask the privilege of dying for my country and her liberty."

The warm light of the May afternoon filled the room, and it reminded me of a duty postponed by circumstances. I had to meet Alice, I had to comfort her grief, and give her the final news about her father. Since the catastrophe I had had no conversation with her, and I could but dimly guess, and also fear, what her thoughts might be. I opened my heart to Trafford. I told him all about Croxon's attitude to the war, and the aversion which Alice had to it.

"She is a brave man's daughter—remember that,"

he said. "Conceal nothing from her. The hour has come for you: this is her hour, too; it will test you both. I think she will meet the test with courage, and I will tell you why—women are quicker to respond to difficult ideals than men. I suppose it is true of all of us that extreme anguish clears the depths of the soul, so that the unworthy elements of one's nature drop to the bottom and are dissolved; but I'm sure it is a process more common among women than men."

Yes, I had already discovered that in Grace Lorimer. I had seen one whom I had thought weak develop under sudden stress heroic qualities. And Alice was not weak; there was a fundamental strength in her.

"You know the old lines," said Trafford with a grave smile:

> "'I could not love thee, dear, so well
> Loved I not honour more.'

That was an appeal addressed to a woman by a man going to the wars. There's no true and noble woman who can resist it. God bless and prosper you, my dear boy."

He accompanied me to the door, and stood there bareheaded, as his courteous habit was.

I walked slowly down the quiet street, with the sense of his benediction resting on me, like a warmth of heavenly sunlight, and took my way to the darkened house at Oakwood.

V

I 'phoned from New York the train by which I would arrive at Oakwood. To my surprise Alice met

me at the station. Her eyes were dark-ringed, the lids had a purplish stain and were swollen, her face was of an ivory white, but her manner was quiet and composed.

"I met you because I wanted to talk to you quite alone," she said.

We walked slowly up the road, till we came to a footpath that led through the woods to the summit of the hills.

"Let us go into the woods," she said. "I can't face the house at present; I couldn't talk there."

She looked at me with a little ghost of a smile, pathetic and whimsical, and added, "Our best hours together have been spent in the open air, haven't they? One's soul seems to breathe outdoors, doesn't it?"

We entered the wood and began to climb the steep path in silence. The last year's leaves were soft beneath our feet, a film of living green was on the trees, splashes of hot sunlight made golden pools around us, and far away, secret and remote, we could hear the cooing of doves.

We came at last to the open sward and the rocky crest with its surprising view. The great plain lay at our feet like a piece of woven tapestry. New York was distinctly visible, with its white towers, its spectral ramparts, and its shining breadth of waters. The sun was sinking and a slow sea of crimson was suffusing everything.

"Let us sit here," she said. "And now tell me what you have found out about my father."

I told her all I had heard that morning at the Cunard Office.

"He died bravely. He saved others, himself he could not save. It was an heroic death."

She sat perfectly still, her wistful eyes fixed upon the fading towers of New York and the crimsoned water, as if trying to visualise the scene.

"He died bravely," she repeated, like a child repeating a hard lesson. "Yes, he would do that. He was a great man."

"A greater man than we knew, Alice."

"Not greater than I knew. I always knew it."

She began to talk in a soft voice, which reminded me vividly of that inexpressible tenderness which I had found so moving in her father's voice, when he spoke of his dead wife and of his vanished happiness.

"When I was a little child I used to wonder at him; he was so strong and big. When I said my prayers at night I really prayed to him: he seemed like God. And when he used to come to me at Tabraham's, I would weave all kinds of romance about him. He was a knight riding up to a castle held by a dragon—he was King Arthur—Lancelot—and I wished he'd wear silver armour, and ride up to the door with a blast of trumpets. It all came back to me last night—those childish dreams, and I saw that they were true. Somehow, I think he wasn't very keen on living. He'd found life disappointing. Perhaps he was disappointed, too, in himself. He hadn't found any really

big thing to do, anything big enough for his greatness. But he found it at the last, didn't he?'

"I think he was disappointed in me. I've been very selfish. In the midst of all my grief the thought came to me that he shouldn't be disappointed in me any more. It was just after the news had come over the 'phone. I went back to my room and locked the door. I didn't want Grace; I had been selfish with her too, and had forgotten what she had lost. I didn't want you—I wanted to be quite alone. The dawn was just breaking, do you recollect? The room was very still, and a bright ray of light began to move across the floor. And then, all at once, I felt that I was not alone. I didn't see any one, but I knew some one was there. And I knew who it was. I wasn't in the least afraid. It was as though the sunlight on the floor stood up, and had a shape, and moved toward me, and wrapt me all round, like warm strong arms. And I heard him say, 'My little girl must be brave It will make me happy if I know she's brave.' All at once the pain went out of my heart, and since then I've been quite calm. Not happy—O, no—but just quiet in my mind, as though a great wind had died down and left a stillness.

"I saw too that I'd been selfish in another way. I hadn't thought much about all the suffering and horror of the war. I hadn't cared to know what had caused it. I was only meanly glad that it hadn't touched my happiness. I knew all at once how wrong I'd been. The war had killed my father. It was a thing so horrible that no man was safe. It was the

work of devils—devils who must be crushed. To sit quiet and do nothing was to connive in its wickedness. It was to betray God."

She turned and put her hands upon my shoulders, looking deep into my eyes.

"Gareth, what are you going to do about it? We've played out our idyll together. The play has become reality. I've given you a knightly name. Will you be worthy of it?"

"I'm going to enlist," I said.

"You would have done it before but for me, wouldn't you?"

"Not that altogether. I've been selfish too. I've been self-centred, egoistic, intent on my own aims in life. I've put off decision."

"When did you decide?"

"In the hour the *Lusitania* sank. Millions will feel as I do. I can claim no credit. The true honour belongs to Alan Joddrel, and young Charles Lorimer—the men who knew their duty from the first, and didn't hesitate."

I went on to tell her of my conversation with Trafford. America would not fight—yet. If she should declare war to-morrow, I and multitudes of others would be proud to fight beneath her colours. But she would not declare war; the nation was not ready for it.

"What will you do then?"

"Go to Canada. I can enlist there."

"Would they take me as a nurse, Gareth?"

"Would you go?"

"Yes. Mary Lorimer has gone. I've lived for my-

self long enough. I've reasoned it all out. If I should stay here my heart would break. If I'm doing something, helping others, I shall find a kind of peace. And only if I do this can I hope that my father won't be disappointed in me."

The sun had set, but the warm radiance still lingered. We rose to go.

"Alice," I said. "Forgive me, if I ask one question. You said the idyll had become reality. Is it to go on—a real idyll, dear? You know what I mean."

For answer she put her hand in mine, and so we stood, silent, with the darkening world at our feet.

Just as we turned to go, she said quietly, "But it would have ended, if you hadn't told me what you did."

VI

I record one more incident of that night of May.

Just before I left to return to New York I told Mrs. Lorimer that I was going to Canada to enlist. She kissed me on the forehead, and said, "I'm glad. And whatever happens I think you'll be glad."

"And I too," said Grace. "You'll avenge us."

Her eyes blazed, her brows were drawn into a level line, and her resemblance to her sister was startling. Even her voice had the hoarse intensity of Mary's voice.

"I want to kill," she said bitterly. "I want to kill Germans. I wish the whole accursed race was killed. I've found out I still believe in hell. God made it because He knew that it would be needed for the Ger-

mans. I've not much left to live for, but I've got this —to be avenged."

Mrs. Lorimer put her arms round her, and drew her to her bosom, where she lay trembling with her passion.

"No, no, Grace. We mustn't think like that. We mustn't fight for vengeance, however just it may appear. We must fight for something bigger, dear. We must fight to make a better world. It's not hate we want—it's love—love of right, and faith. We soon tire of hating. It exhausts us. But our strength is fed on love. We grow strong by loving. And if we love right with all our hearts I think we come to pity those who do wrong, to pity them much more than we hate them, knowing how unhappy they must be."

I could not but listen with reverence to that wise and gentle voice: yet it seemed to utter a counsel of perfection. My heart was too hot with its throbbing bruise to be healed by such soft medicaments. I did hate, and I told myself I did well to hate. I could not say of these deliberate murderers that I forgave them for they knew not what they did: they did know, and the pardon due to ignorance they could not claim. All too clear to my eyes was the result of their abominable crime—Grace robbed of her lover, Alice of her father; perhaps Mrs. Lorimer herself robbed of her son, who at any moment might be reported among the maimed, the missing or the dead.

But as I walked down the road to the station, with the silence of the starry night around me, I reached a calmer frame of mind. "We must fight for some-

thing bigger than hate—we must fight to make a better world"—was not that a true saying?

I was going to kill men, but if I killed them with hatred in my heart, that was murder. If war meant that, it was what the pacifists so often called it—organised assassination. But if I fought without any hatred of individual men in my heart, only hatred of the thing they represented, I fought with love of right in my heart. And when men did this, war was not organised murder, but organised retribution.

The thought came to me that the Christ in whose teachings and example Mrs. Lorimer found her strength to suffer and endure, knew how to hate. But there was this strange quality in his hatred, that it was not directed against the individual. He hated pharisaism, but he dined with Pharisees; he hated perfidy, but he spoke tenderly to Judas. His love was so much greater than his hatred that his hatred itself was enraged love—it was "the wrath of the Lamb." It was love that was the light, and hatred the shadow; the shadow that made love visible.

And I saw, too, that it was the spirit of hate that had ruined Germany. The spirit of envy, jealousy, covetousness, ignoble spite, at last culminating in a diabolic hate. Hatred for all the things that made for love and gentleness, denunciation of them as the weakness of cowardice; the worship of hardness, the scientific culture of ferocity. And because hate is blind, total ignorance of what went on in ordinary human hearts, their secret sanctities and ideals, the things they held sacred—such things as honour, mag-

nanimity, fidelity to the pledged word, abhorrence of brutality and cruelty.

That was why the *Lusitania* had been sunk—it was the work of blind unreasoning hatred. Because her hatred had blinded her, Germany could not comprehend how her act would be regarded. She could not perceive that she had pilloried herself in undying infamy. Hatred had alienated her from the common conscience of mankind. She did not know how that conscience worked, what were the principles of its judgment, because this madness of hatred had destroyed her power of vision. She would go on doing things at which the world shuddered, until at last the cup of her iniquity was full, and the whole world would unite to make an end of her, as the most peaceful men unite to kill a rabid dog.

No, I must not fight like that; I must not make revenge my chief thought, for if I did I should be mastered by my hate, and my hate would brutalise me.

There came to me the vision of Charles Lorimer and Alan Joddrel, and the crowd of joyous youthful faces in those grim fighting lines—the cleanness, the grace, the boyish cheerfulness, the jesting courage: no, these were not haters. They were sweet-natured; war could not make them ill-natured, bitter, brutal. And I knew why—it was because they saw war as a Cause, not an Enmity. They fought for a big thing, something so much bigger than themselves that the personal element was lost sight of, overwhelmed, all but eliminated.

Had not I already caught a glimpse of what that

meant? Alice had revealed it to me. She had not urged me to revenge. She had risen beyond her personal grief; she had recognised a Cause, for which it was good that men should give themselves, should renounce all things, should be willing to die. Even Love had acknowledged that supreme claim. The long anticipated moment of surrender had been achieved in silence. No word of rapture, not even a kiss—only a firm hand laid in mine, the cold sweetness of a nun-like pledge, the sense of knightly vows before an altar. Not that she was really cold; but that the personal elements of life, of which the love of woman for man and man for woman are chief, had become insignificant before the grandeur of impersonal aims. She loved me, but she could not love me unless the Cause was dearer to me than her love.

And so beneath that starry sky, out of the silent immensities, came the true Call, which I had once thought was not for me.

It was the call to lose the personal elements of life in surrender to the collective elements, in which self had no place.

"For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and wife and children——"

Shall leave them, but that he may find them. Love could be found in no other way. To cling to love at the sacrifice of duty was to lose it.

And that low-spoken word of Alice's filled my heart; if I had not been willing to lose her I could not have found her; if I had not been willing to enlist our idyll would have ended.

CHAPTER VIII

SIX MONTHS LATER

I

THE Camp lies round me very silent under the vast arch of night. I can hear the restless champing of the horses in the stables five hundred yards away, the hoot of an owl in the woods, the whistle of a freight-train in the cutting. These are the major sounds, but there are many minor ones—the rustle of dead leaves and dry grasses, the soft stir of tiny creatures in the road bank beneath my tent, the noise of a rolling pebble in its sharp impact on the road; and, all round me, the intaken breath of sleeping men. A round yellow moon is tilted forward on the black edge of the pine-clad hills. A thin scud of cloud is weaving a veil of gossamer across the zenith. The ancient earth swings upon its course like a sleeping ship, skirting the dark shores of infinity, directed by this light-house moon, and the stars which twinkle like fire-eyed buoys upon unfathomable waters.

I cannot sleep. All the past goes streaming through my mind like an endless picture-film. I know that I have come to one of those hours of life when the soul takes stock of its emotions and experiences and seeks to realise itself.

The intense stillness of the night recalls many summer nights in Fruitvale. Poor Fruitvale, how scattered are its simple folk! Vernon is in Mesopotamia, little Mrs. Vernon is working in a munition factory at Ottawa, Dutton has purged his memory forever from its rankling stain of cowardice by a soldier's death at Ypres. Morrison alone remains, still reading the Overseas edition of the *Times,* and uttering oracular opinions upon the conduct of the war, but to a sadly diminished audience, for the ranches are deserted. Weeds grow thick among the trees, and the windows of the homes are boarded up. All the men have gone, and one by one the women are going too. Even old Mrs. Hales has gone; she is in England with her wounded son, who will never walk again.

Since that May evening when I left New York for Ottawa so much has happened to me that I no longer seem the same person.

First of all came the physical discipline. I found myself back at school, but a school where physical values were the chief things required. I realised that I had never been genuinely tired before. In other days when I was tired I could rest; but here, however weary I might be, I had to go on. Riding bare-back for a dozen miles before breakfast is no joke; men often came back with their legs raw and streaming with blood. If a man fell off he got no sympathy. He was jeered at by his mates, and told by his officer to go to London—only it wasn't London—and ride doped donkeys on a blasted heath. A harder man than

that instructor I never met; his eyes was hard and clear, his face hard as granite, and his voice hard as an inquisitor's, with a sort of mocking rage. But he knew his business, and after a time I recognised what his business was. It was to break down incompetents, to create competence out of poor material. There were times when I could have shot him willingly, so brutal were his gibes at some poor chap who failed beneath his iron discipline. There were other times when I could conceive no higher satisfaction than to win a brief glance of approval from those hard eyes. At the bottom of my thoughts was a stubborn resolution that he should not break me. I might die beneath the test. I might even desert in some passionate moment of despair, but no man should dare to call me incompetent.

Of that physical discipline I can now say that it was one of the best things that ever happened to me. The pure air, the hard exercise, the rough fare, the dreamless sleep worked a reconstitution of my members. My blood moved more swiftly in my veins, and there was pure joy, such as young children feel, in the very movement of my limbs.

There was a mental reconstitution, too. My thoughts, which had so long been turned inward, were now turned outward. They were all directed toward immediate duties—simple, necessary, practical things that must be done. There came to me slowly the thrilling sense that I was part of a gigantic whole. I was no more a detached personality; I was an atom in something corporate. This corporate thing men

called an Army. It was a vast entity, whose tentacles embraced the world. Its vigour and its life depended on me, as the body depends on the true functions of each tiniest atom for its health. Men upon the fields of Flanders, men beside the Tigris, men moving like dark specks across the sands of Egypt were knit to me by invisible nerves and ligaments, and I to them. If I failed they would be the weaker for my failure, and if I were strong they would be the stronger because of me.

It was a hard thing at first to submit to authority, to know that I was no longer free. It was a harder thing to recognise in those set over me no gleam of intellectual superiority. They cared for none of the things I cared for, knew none of the things I knew, and would have despised them had they been aware of them. But there was no denying the fact that they knew many things I did not know. And they knew the very things that I was there to learn. It was my business to lay guns, to calculate velocities and distances, to know how to drive a gun into action with the utmost speed and with a keen eye for position. They could teach me all these things, and after all these were the things I wanted most to know.

I look back, and see myself struggling on from day to day, tired to death, humiliated by my failures, glowing with pride at my rare successes—but always struggling on. I whipped my flagging energies with the thought that what others could accomplish I could do. Gradually there came to me a sort of joy that I had lost my former self. It hovered like a dis-

housed spirit, pitiable and absurd, on the horizons of consciousness, and finally disappeared. I saw my egoisms, my vanities, my weaknesses shredded off, as a man puts off his clothes that his body may stand, in its strong nakedness, unashamed against the sun.

Above all, there came to me the sense of something big, something Titanic, that loomed beyond all the petty details of the camp and the parade-ground. It was the Cause, the Crusade, the great Vortex of heroism that was sweeping in life after life, using it, transforming it, making it part of an immortal struggle. As I look upon this quiet midnight sky I hear the distant rush of its tremendous tides. It is coming nearer, and I am glad of it.

It has come very near now. Three days ago some hundreds of our men left for England and the front. I saw them go, singing as they marched, and all at once I conceived an extraordinary affection for them. Some of them I knew well, some a little, some not at all. There were all sorts among them, the college boy, the farm-hand, the clerk, the mechanic: the orderly, the sloven, the serious-minded, the hare-brained; with a fair proportion of dare-devils, for whom life was a joke and war an adventure; yet they were my comrades in arms. They represented humanity to me—the bit of humanity I knew best. We had shared heat and cold together, rain and sunshine, labour, endeavour, and much patient drudgery. They marched with so fine a swing, their young faces were bright with such buoyant hope, their eyes were so steady and so clear, that I wondered if the human race had ever

flowered into anything more perfect. And there rested on them too, on the good and bad alike, the aureole of consecration. They were on their way to incalculable suffering, to a world of horrors, to the cold embrace of death, but they were not afraid. They saluted death with songs.

I see now that the greatest thing in life is not to be afraid. I do not mean physical courage altogether, though that is essential. Every man shrinks from a sudden blow; that, I suppose, is the working of the primeval law of self-preservation. I've no doubt when the first explosive shell screams over me I shall duck my head. That will mean nothing more than an animal sense of peril, an instinct which we share with all living creatures. And I have as little doubt that I shall overcome that form of fear when I realise that dropping shrapnel is a normal feature of my daily life, and in the end shall take as little notice of it as I would of leaves dropping in a forest or hail out of a winter sky. When physical peril becomes normal the terror of it disappears.

But there's a subtler fear bred in us by an artificial civilisation. As I see things now, I recognise that this fear lay at the root of all things in my former life. I was afraid I shouldn't succeed in life, afraid for my reputation, afraid to do anything that might hinder the development of my mind, afraid even of the displeasure of my critics and of the possibility of interrupted relations with my public. All these things appear now to be matters of no moment. I don't really care whether or no I succeed in life, as suc-

cess was measured by the old standards, because those standards have been overthrown. They exist for me no more, and with their disappearance has gone a whole world of trivialities, a whole complicated system of hopes and fears, of manœuvres and intrigues, of selfish aims and pushing egoisms.

And with them has gone also the most dismaying fear of all, the fear of death. I don't quite know how it has happened. I remember when I was sixteen having an acute fear of death. I hated to walk near a graveyard or hear a tolling bell, and nothing could have persuaded me to look on the face of a corpse. I think the root of this dismay lay in a dreadful fear that I shouldn't live to enjoy life thoroughly. I should die before I had known what love was, before I had tasted the sweetness of a girl's kiss, before I had travelled and seen France and Italy; I should die cheated of the joys of living. And I wanted to live so intensely.

I think it is because we want so many things in life, or because we have them, that we fear death so much. But if once those things we covet lose their value for us, we don't mind losing them. Great possessions, or the hope of them, make death terrible.

I don't quite explain myself; but what it comes to is that I don't cling to life, with the abject fear of losing it that I once had. Of course I want to live, and mean to, if I can; but I don't fear death. The fear of death reached me through the fear of losing things; but now that my hold on these things is relinquished the thought of death doesn't trouble me.

The poisonous thing in our old modes of life was that we were all clinging to life in a kind of cowardly desperation. We could conceive nothing worse happening to us than that we should die. We would not even contemplate the thought of death, made believe it didn't exist, were like children who think they can get rid of something they don't wish to see by hiding their heads beneath the bed-clothes. We amused ourselves with this and that pursuit which dulled the thought of death. One man bought pictures, and another built up estates, each trying to persuade himself he would never die; his years were secure and whatever death did to other people it would never have the effrontery to disturb him. We wouldn't look facts in the face. We shut ourselves off from them with all kinds of ingenious devices. So we became cowards, hiding under the bed-clothes. It's all changed now. Reality has rushed in upon us. We can't go on doing the little things we loved to do. We've seen death, and it wasn't so terrible after all. We've found a strange new exhilaration in going up to the spectre, and saying, "You can't hurt us, after all. All you can do is to take us away from certain things which we thought necessary to our happiness, but which we now know are not. And, besides, you can't touch our souls. They laugh at you. You'd better come out of your corner, and cease making mouths at us, and get out,— you're no better than a Hallowe'en ghost made of a lighted pumpkin on a stick, and we're not afraid of you."

And then the child ventures out of the bed-clothes,

and looks toward the dark corner, and behold there's nothing there. Death has gone.

So I try to write my thoughts, as I sit in this little tent, lit by a small candle which shows signs of going out. I've not succeeded very well, but I think I've got at the truth about myself.

The day is coming up across the hills, in a pale wash of grey through which, as through the milky dulness of an opal, elemental fires begin to pierce. The camp begins to stir and a bugle sounds, thin and clear as the horns of Elfland.

I wonder what the day will bring for me!

II

I make haste to write down an impression that has come to me, lest I should forget it.

It was while I was engaged in the ordinary duties of the morning. They were all relatively small, of little separate importance, and yet I found real pleasure in doing them because I saw that they all fitted into something that was of great importance. For example, there's the tedious and trivial business of keeping oneself smart—buttons polished till they shine like gold, boots thoroughly cleaned, accoutrements in perfect order, one's clothes meticulously neat, and so forth. "What's the use of it all?" asks the civilian. "Isn't it absurd, and a little childish too, to set grown men who have a big job ahead of them, to these paltry tasks?"

Well, the point is they aren't paltry. They are vital factors in creating self-respect and proper pride. A man who knows himself well dressed has a better poise than the man who is conscious of being ill-dressed. The officers of the days of Marlborough and Turenne used to powder their wigs before they went into battle, and put on their finest coats, the idea being that if they had to die they might as well die looking their best, as well-dressed gentlemen. They didn't fight the worse because they were gentlemen; on the contrary, their pride in their appearance reacted on their pride in valour, helped to steady them and give them poise and imperturbable serenity in the hour of danger.

Time hasn't changed human nature in this respect. When men are taught to take pride in their appearance, we know they'll take pride in their regiment too, in its reputation, its honour, its traditions. Slovens make bad soldiers. They are likely to become slovenly in much more serious matters and be careless in their work. And to be careless in the Army is a grave offence, for the lives of many men depend upon the conduct of each individual man.

But that's not quite what I set out to say.

The thought that came to me this morning was the extraordinary sense of relief and release one has in finding his whole life arranged for him, without any reference to his active will. I imagine this is just the way mediæval men felt who entered religious orders and adopted a cloistral life. They had ceased to be responsible for the daily arrangement of their lives.

Each hour was ordered, each had its definite employment, and the perturbation of conflicting personal desires had ceased. There was an immense gain in this.

Army life rests upon the same base. It affords release from self. It exacts complete obedience, just as a religious order does. It narrows down all the various and divergent duties of life to a small practicable chart, teaches men to live by rule, takes from them the government of their desires, and in return gives them a real peace of mind. I have never had a mind so much at peace as since I became a soldier. I have watched the same effect on other men. Faces that bore many signs of anxiety, agitation, desire, have been smoothed out, have become calm and steadfast. And in the eyes of some of them—the finer sort—there has come after a while the kind of serene look one sees in the smiling saints of mediæval artists.

I like to dwell on this thought, because it suggests an analogous conception of the universe. What if all men are, after all, units in the vast armies of God, who is willing to take from them the government and burden of their own lives, if they will but submit to His authority? I feel as if this is somehow true. At any rate I feel that nothing can give me so much strength and such real peace of mind as to think that God does arrange my whole life for me.

I want the help of such a thought particularly just now. At the mess to-day all sorts of rumours went round among the men. Some said a wire had come from Ottawa inviting a certain number of officers to volunteer to replace the heavy casualties at the Front.

Others said we were all going within a day or two—they had seen the order. No one knew, but the gist of all these reports was that our time in camp was very near its close.

That's why I want to get a firm grip on this idea of a divine arrangement in our lives. I know what I want. I shall be dreadfully disappointed if others go, and leave me in camp. I shall be almost as badly disappointed if I get to England, only to kick my heels at Salisbury or Folkestone, as lots of fellows have done. I want to get to the Front, and get there quickly. I don't know whether this is the sort of thing I ought to ask God for; in any case it always seems to me that prayer that certain earthly things may come your way is a gross impertinence to God, because it looks as though you think He needs prompting to do the right thing. So I'm not going to pray about it, for such a prayer would look like asking God to do my will, whereas the chief end of prayer is to learn to do God's will.

But I am going to pin my faith to the wise arrangement of things. I am a man under authority, and I should be a poor soldier if I didn't trust the wisdom of the Powers set over me.

III

The afternoon mail has brought me a letter from Alice. This is what she says:

Paris, October 30th, 1915.

MY DEAR GARETH:

When are you coming over? Surely you've been in training long enough. We want you so much. You'll never know how badly we need you till you are really here and see things for yourself. Day by day the long ambulance trains come crawling into Paris full of maimed and battered men. O, they are marvellously brave, these French soldiers. They lie quite silent, waiting their turn, with the kind of patient look in their eyes you see in the eyes of a wounded dog. At first I couldn't bear to look at them. Such grief and pity tore my heart that I felt an uncontrollable hysteric wave sweep over me. I wanted to weep—and weep. But there was something in their patient calmness that steadied me. I wonder where we English and Americans got the notion that the French were volatile? On the contrary, they seem to me born stoics. There's a hard fibre in their natures, something firm and indomitable, like the rock that underlies soft loam, and turns the edge of the steel ploughshare. The British are quite different. They're quite as courageous under pain, but they seem to think it a point of honour to joke about it. They endure agony by pretending it doesn't exist. They laugh it out of existence. The French don't do that. They just lie still and suffer. Their big dark eyes hold unfathomable thoughts, but their lips are silent. The pathos of that silence is something that defies description.

The French will never be conquered, nor will the

British. The reason is that they're gentlemen—they've got the great qualities of strength and gentleness which the old knights had. Something very different from the Boche—who mistakes brutality for strength, and despises gentleness; who, because he does this, thinks it a fine thing to shoot village priests, rape women, cut off children's hands, and defile the rooms of ancient châteaux with unnameable animal filth. America doesn't understand this, doesn't believe it, because she doesn't know the true Boche. But even the Boche gets some inkling of what he's like now and then. One of the best of them once said to an Englishman, who pleaded for magnanimity in warfare, "You Englishmen will always be fools, and we Germans will never be gentlemen." He spoke the truth—he understood his countrymen.

I've found my job. I'm in the hospital for face and head wounds. Poor fellows come here with their jaws blown away, and all sorts of dreadful injuries to the face and head. The business of our surgeons is to build up new faces for them, and this they do in a manner almost miraculous. You've no idea what a fine aquiline nose can be created out of a bit of a man's shin-bone grafted into the face! Horrible, isn't it? But the curious thing is that I've become quite unconscious of the horror. The only thing I'm conscious of is the tremendous need. And it's not so long ago that I should have fainted at sights much less horrible than these. But I'm changed—we're all changed in the very qualities of our nature by this war. There's a book I read once, the life of a woman who was a

nurse—she said, "When you touch the flesh of your patients think that you're touching the flesh of Christ, and however repulsive they may be, you will not feel repulsion." That's how I feel. I realise that these wounds are sacrificial, and feel there's something holy in them; they make me think of the wounds of Christ when they took Him down from the Cross.

You know how I went to this work. My heart was half broken, and the most I hoped for was that I might forget my grief in a life of strenuous activity. I've not forgotten my grief, but in some mysterious way it's healed. I say the way is mysterious, and yet it's really very simple. It all comes of turning your thoughts outward instead of inward (the same discovery which I have made). I've no time to think of myself; there are too many things to be done for others. I go to bed when I go—it's not every night—wearied out, but I sleep now with a kind of peace that I've never known since I was a child. I suppose it's the same in the trenches, where men fall asleep amid mud and filth and corruption with a more complete composure than the softest pillows ever brought them.

O Gareth—I want you dreadfully at times. I hope the thoughtful Providence that shapes our ends will let you come through Paris on the way to the Front. You are all I have—quite all, do you realise that? I can't quite bring myself to speak of love—and besides there's the censor to be considered. But I will ask you to believe that through life to death, and maybe beyond death, this is my faithful pledge,

Only and always your LYNETTE.

IV

There's a great shouting in the Camp. Men are running to and fro, like school-boys, who have just been granted an unexpected holiday. They are beginning to sing—a cornet joins in and dominates their voices—it is the National Anthem they are singing. My batman comes pounding over the grass, his face red with excitement, his hands waving wildly.

"What is it?" I shout.

"We're all going. The order's come."

I gather up my papers quietly, and put them away. It will be a long time before I write anything again. I have the sense that a chapter of my life is closed finally. These memoranda of my thoughts and feelings which I have written down at odd moments represent a dead self. Another self has risen in me, which has yet to prove its quality. I have but one prayer, that I may not fail beneath the test.

I am profoundly happy. Never before have I been truly happy. But I am now, and it is as Alan Joddrel said in quite a new way. The new way is surrender, and it's only definition is the saying of the old mystic, "In finding myself I lost myself; in losing myself I found both myself and God."

From that ended past one beautiful joy has been plucked, my love for Alice. This I know will not wither. It is a flower only in the bud, whose full beauty is yet to be revealed.

I don't know how our idyll will end, but I am sure

it is enduring. We shall each do our part in the tremendous struggle, and God will write its last lines as He sees fit.

The bands are playing now before the verandah of the mess-room. It's the old air, which the men sang as they marched away three days ago:

"Keep the Home-fires burning,
Till the boys come home."

In a few days we'll all be marching down the same road to our hidden destiny, and there will be none who will go with a gladder heart than I.

FINIS

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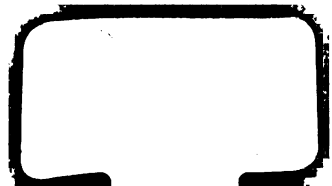

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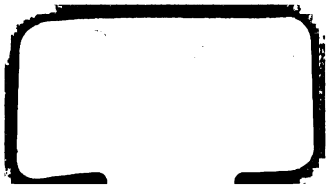
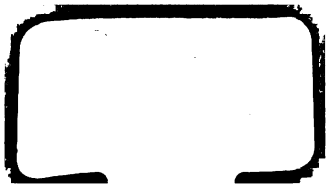
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